

The
**GIRL SCOUTS
AT SEA CREST**



✱ ✱ **LILIAN GARIS** ✱ ✱



THE CAPTAIN STOOPED AND LIFTED HER IN HIS ARMS.
"The Girl Scouts at Sea Crest."

THE GIRL SCOUTS AT SEA CREST

OR

The Wig Wag Rescue

By LILIAN GARIS

Author of

"The Girl Scout Pioneers," "The Girl Scouts
at Bellaire," etc.

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By LILIAN GARIS

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Or, The Wig Wag Rescue

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THE GIRL SCOUTS AT SEA CREST

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SAME OLD OCEAN	1
II. THE BOTTLED WARNING	11
III. A COUPLE OF FREAKS	19
IV. MARGARET-BY-THE-DAY	25
V. CAPTAIN DAVE	32
VI. CRABS AND DISASTER	42
VII. A DIFFICULT SITUATION	51
VIII. AT WEASEL POINT	58
IX. THE FIRE AT THE PIER	67
X. PLANNING FOR ACTION	75
XI. AT THE COLONNADE	83
XII. ON THE SANDS	91
XIII. A BLANKET OF FOG	102
XIV. ABOARD THE BLOWELL	113
XV. STRANDED	123
XVI. THE BAREFOOT GIRLS	132

CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
XVII. A RELIC FROM THE ALAMEDA . . .	144
XVIII. THE WIG WAG RESCUE	155
XIX. THE GLORIOUS AFTERMATH	165
XX. A REVELATION	176
XXI. ON LUNA LAND	187
XXII. A COMEDY OF THE ROCKS	196
XXIII. SCOUTS EVERY ONE	204

THE GIRL SCOUTS AT SEA CREST

CHAPTER I

SAME OLD OCEAN

THREE girls stood on the beach watching the waves—the tireless, endless, continuous toss, break, splash; toss, break, splash! Always the same climbing combers smoothly traveling in from eternity, mounting their hills to the playful height of liquid summits, then rolling down in an ocean of foam, to splash on the beach into the most alluring of earth's play toys—the breakers.

“And we thought the baby mountain at Bellaire beautiful—why this ocean is—well, it is simply bigger and grander than anything I have ever dreamed of,” declared Grace. “No wonder the girls out in Chicago long to spend a summer at the sea shore.”

“I couldn't even find a word to describe it,” admitted Cleo. “Doesn't it look like eternity all spilled out?”

"And the roll is like the origin of noise," suggested Grace. "Now, Weasie, what do you see that looks like—like the original public service telephone company, or the first gas and electric plant? Don't you think those glints of color and sparks of foam may be our first sulphur springs?"

"I never could claim a poetic imagination," admitted Louise, known to her chums as Weasie, "but I might see a family resemblance there to—well—to a first-class Turkish bath. There! How the mighty hath fallen! From the origin of noise and eternity spilled out, down to a mundane yet highly desirable Turkish bath! And girls, mine is the only practical description, for a bath it is to be, ours for all summer! Can you imagine it?"

"And smell the salt?" prompted Cleo. "Since you insist on being practical, no use talking about the aroma of the gods, or the incense of the mermaids. Weasie, I see you are going to keep us down to earth; and I guess you are right. Essays are better in school than done orally on a beautiful beach. But really isn't it overwhelming?"

"I'll admit that much," replied Weasie. "But you see, I have had a glimpse of the beach before. I vacationed here for one week. Then I have been to Atlantic City in winter. That's simply wonderful. But you little Westerners, all the way from Pennsylvania," and she

laughed at the idea, "you, of course, have only seen good old Lake Erie. Yes, girls, this is the ocean. Meet Madame Atlantic," with a sweeping gesture toward the ocean. "But look out! That's how Madame Atlantic meets us! Just look at my pumps!"

A vengeful wave had crept in and deliberately splashed the three pairs of new summer pumps, before the girls realized they were being surrounded.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Grace. "How did that wave get in without us seeing it? And we standing right there watching it! My shoes are simply done for," and she looked about for a place to sit down and dump out some of the damage.

"That's the way with waves," explained Louise, who now stood sponsor for the ocean and its habits. "You never can tell just what a wave will do."

"I see," said Cleo, trying to plough through the heavy sand without burying the soaking wet slippers. "I suppose we may call this our initiation. Changing time at Pittsburg is nothing to changing pumps at Sea Crest. Let's to it."

"And salt water is ruinous to leather." I know that much," declared Grace. "Weasie, you should have told us to leave our shoes on land and come into the sands barefoot. I suppose that's why all the picture dancers are bare-

foot on the sands; it's so hard on slippers. There's a barrel. Let's anchor that and divest ourselves. Did you ever see dry land so far away? This sand is as bad as water to plough through."

"Knocks the poetry out of it, doesn't it?" teased Louise. "But don't let's mind. What are mere pumps to all this?"

They reached the barrel which had been washed up on the beach and was quite securely embedded in the sand. On this the three chums took refuge from the ocean water and sea of sand, while they attempted to wring out their soaking socks and hang them on some brush to dry.

"This is such a lovely big barrel," commented Cleo. "Let's sit here, and while our wash dries we can tell marine stories. Grace, you had better put your pumps up farther. That island may be washed away with the next wave."

"I guess I will," agreed Grace. "It seems to me this old ocean knows we are greenies the way it tantalizes us. Now there!" and she placed the two black slippers much farther up from the line marked by the incoming tide. "I hope the next set of waves will be polite enough to keep their distance. Come on to the barrel and let's hear about Madaline. Why couldn't she come down?"

They adjusted themselves again on the great

cask, and Cleo proceeded to narrate the details of her recent letter from their chum, Madaline.

"Her folks are going to travel this summer so we can't have our little roly-poly Madaline with us," she explained. "Of course, we shall miss her, but we are going to have Mary. Her rich relations are coming down to the Colonade."

"To that immense gold-and-white hotel over there!" exclaimed Grace. "Then we shall have wonderful times visiting her. And we can see all the dances and masquerades—I suppose they have a very gay season at a hotel like that."

"I saw a circular announcing the opening on the fifteenth," said Louise. "Perhaps Mary will be down then and we may be invited."

"I smell fire," interrupted Cleo, "and there isn't a streak of smoke in sight. Wonder where it can be?"

"I am sure that *is* fire somewhere," declared Grace. "Where *can* it be!" and she too sniffed the odor of smoke.

"Oh my!" exclaimed Louise, jumping up and dragging her chums with her. "We are on fire! See, it is in the barrel!"

"And my skirt is burned!" declared Grace. "Just see!" exhibiting a singed hole in her blue serge skirt.

"However did a fire start in there?" questioned Cleo. "Let's see."

But there was no need of investigation, for

scarcely had they jumped from their places when a sheet of flame shot out from the open end of the otherwise innocent looking cask.

"Land sakes!" declared Louise. "We were lucky not to be blown up. How did that start with no one in sight to start it?"

"Maybe we touched off a fuse," suggested Cleo jokingly.

"No, I'll tell you," offered Grace. "When we sat on the barrel we shut out the wind from the side, all but enough to create a draft; and the paper must have been smoldering. Now, just look at our perfectly good seat turned into a beach fire! We had better rescue our socks. Maybe those sticks will explode under them, next thing we know."

"Oh, just look here!" called Cleo. "See what I just kicked up! It's a bottle and has a note in it! Maybe it's a warning from the fire-bug," she finished, dragging from the sand a bottle and proceeding to pull out the paper which had been carefully wound with a cord, the end of which was brought out at the cork. Cleo promptly let the cork pop, yanked the string, and so dislodged the note.

"I knew it," she exclaimed, "a message from the pirates. Listen to this!"

Grace and Louise hopped back to hear the contents of the rolled slip of paper.

"Short enough," commented Cleo. "It simply says, 'Beware of the fire-bug' and it's

signed 'The Weasle'. Well, I never! Beware of the fire-bug," she repeated, "and not a human in sight that fire-bug fires. And signing himself the Weasle! Must be pretty snappy. Well, I say girls, as early as we thought we were getting down, before all the other schools were dismissed, the little old fire-bug got here first. What do you make of it?"

"Maybe some one comes in by boat from some island, and leaves the fires to start up with a clock signal, like they do it in the movies," suggested Grace.

Louise and Cleo laughed the idea to scorn.

"Can you imagine an island in the ocean?" asked Louise. "And just look at the writing of this note! It is a perfectly modern school hand. Some small boy I suppose, who has been reading too much Captain Kidd. At any rate let us be glad we didn't burn up more skirts, although it is too bad to spoil that splendid new serge, Grace," she finished, commiserating with the girl who was just then judging the size of the hole burnt in her skirt by trying to view the sun through it.

"Oh, perhaps I can fix it," speculated Grace. "It's a very nice round hole, and I may cover it with a patch pocket, though it would be rather low down to trust my wealth to it. However, it is all right. And the fire will finish drying our socks and pumps. And also, we have something to remember in our first beach fire.

I have often read of them. They usually toast potatoes and things in the fires, don't they?"

"Marshmallows," corrected Louise, quite well informed on beach lore. "We'll have a marshmallow roast when enough of the girls come down. But it is nice to get here first and find everything out. When the other schools close next week I suppose we won't be able to find one another, with the crowds that will flock to this beach. And just now we have it all to ourselves," she finished, looking up and down the vast expanse of territory known as the ocean front, and therefore quite as extensive as the stretch of the ocean itself.

"All the same," insisted Grace, smoothing again the rolled slip of paper which Cleo had handed over. "I believe this is written by someone——"

"We all do," interrupted Cleo with a smile.

"I mean some one who is a firebug!"

"Oh, come now," teased Louise. "I don't believe you are as sensational as that, Grace. Firebugs don't grow in the ocean, like crabs. Just see that funny crab trying to get in your slipper. You don't suppose he can write notes, and start fires, do you?"

"And here's another sort of monster," called Cleo, who was poking in the sand near the edge. "I believe this fellow could do most anything if he had the tools. Just look! Isn't he horrid looking?"

"Ugh!" exclaimed Grace, "I'm glad I never eat fish!"

"That's a skate," explained Louise. "No one eats that sort of fish. Isn't he ugly?" and a determined thrust with her beach stick (a piece of bamboo salvaged from the drift wood), sent the dead monster out into the deep.

"If I had a pencil, I would put an answer to that letter in the bottle," proposed Cleo. "We might get a lot of fun out of it."

"And we might also get a visit from friend fire-bug," cautioned Grace. "And I don't know whether our cottage is insured or not. But I do know it has lovely furniture and mother says it's a perfect joy to come into a house, all spick and span without having to do the spicking. No, Cleo, please don't invite the Weasle to call."

"I have a tiny dance card pencil," offered Louise. "Let's write a note just for fun. Of course, no one will ever find it."

Cleo ran up the sand to the board walk where bits of paper could be seen flying in the early summer breeze. She returned, presently, with a piece suitable for their pirate message.

"Let's write a scary answer," she proposed. "Here, I'll say 'Wild Weasle, take heed! We have seen your sign and will return for vengeance!' Signed 'The Pirates!' There!" she concluded. "If any fire-bug finds that maybe he will take heed. Where's the bottle?"

Louise produced the erstwhile soda water container, and into this the girls' letter was poked, with the poke-string left out at the cork, as per sample.

"We're beginning early," said Cleo. "Louise, I'm glad you know the beach. You may save us from disaster, although we have had so many experiences first out at Flosston, then last summer at Bellaire. I suppose, like trouble, adventure is bound to come to those who seek it. Now, we are all ready. Have the right shoes on the right feet, have buried our Pirate Threat, and so let's go back home. I'm just crazy to show you the love of a cottage we have."

"I thought ours was the very prettiest," said Grace, "but we shall inspect yours first, Cleo. Then look at mine, and if Louise——"

"Certainly, I want you to come over and see my sleeping porch. I hardly believe there is one prettier here. Come along."

"We should have called out the department," said Cleo. "Just fancy them extinguishing that hole in your skirt, Grace!"

And the romp from the beach echoed with their merry laughter for all could vision Grace under the fire hose!

"This way to the Log Cabin!" announced Cleo leading her friends from the boardwalk along the Avenue to her quaint summer home. "Now, for our first inspection!"

CHAPTER II

THE BOTTLED WARNING

O H, how curious!" This from Grace.
"Like a mountain house at the seashore. All field stones and rustic trimmings," commented Louise.

"We think it simply great," declared Cleo.
"Come along till I show you the big attic. It was built for a studio, and looks right over the ocean. I never dreamed seashore landlords could offer for rent such a wonder house as this."

"Folks tire of things so easily, and continually long for change, I suppose," said Louise. "But you were lucky to get this, Cleo. I fancy one of the many artists coming here would love to have found it first."

"Can you imagine an entire house trimmed with rough cedar? And just see the length of these cedar beams! Fully forty feet; they go straight from one end of the house to the other," declared Cleo, proudly pointing out the novelties of the Log Cabin.

"And just see here!" exclaimed Grace. "A real dogwood tree trimmed with the most per-

fect paper flowers. Isn't that simply lovely!"

This last found attraction was a novelty indeed, for it was nothing less than a fine sized dogwood tree standing against a latticed cedar screen; and this tree of natural wood was decorated with perfectly made paper flowers—quite as if the original blooms had developed into the "everlasting" variety. A wonderful fireplace of field stones opened in the living room, and sent its tower clear to the studio on the third floor; while every board and stick in the cottage was either of rough natural cedar, or the same wood chastened to bring out the marvellous tones of color that can only be described as cedar.

It was, in truth, a remarkable summer home; and while we leave the girls here to explore its glories, we may take a moment to recall the other two volumes of this series: "The Girl Scout Pioneers; or Winning the First B. C." and the second "The Girl Scouts at Bellaire; or Maid Mary's Awakening."

In the first we were treated to an intimate view of girl scouting as it is worked out in the groups known as patrols and troops. The True Tred Troop of Floss-ton, a Pennsylvania mill town, was composed of a lively little company indeed, and these American girls were given an opportunity of working and lending influence to a group of mill girls, whose quaint characteristics and innate resourcefulness make

an attractive background for our story picture.

How the runaway girls were reclaimed, how a little woodland fairy, Jacqueline, worked out a scout fantasy, and how a very modest deed won the first Bronze Cross, makes the first volume of this series a book calculated to inspire as well as to fascinate the reader.

The second volume: "The Girl Scouts at Bellaire," narrates the remarkable experience of our True Treds in a mountain town in New Jersey, where, while spending a vacation, they discover Maid Mary, the orphan of the orchids, a child of strange fancies and queer tropical influences, who has been made a victim of the orchid seekers to the extent of being kept from her relations until the rare bulb is found by the Girl Scouts.

The glory of the orchids, with their delightful colors and their rarest of perfumes, permeates the story, while the vague, subtle influence of queer foreigners lends sufficient clouds to bring out the real beauties of the tale. The Girl Scout Series is intended to furnish the best sort of good reading in an attractive style, suited at once to the needs of the girl's mind, and her natural enjoyment of the story, while it will stand the most critical censorship of parents and caretakers of the plastic minds of young girls.

And now our girls are ransacking the Log Cabin from roof to landing, (there is no cellar

to the beach cottage) and on this the first day of their vacation at Sea Crest, hours are all too short in which to cram the joys of exploration.

"I have never seen a place like this," declared Grace, when all three scouts came to a halt finally on the low couch under the indoor dogwood tree. "We can have lovely parties here, can't we, Cleo?"

"Surely," agreed the hostess. "But girls, what shall we do about scouting this summer?" she asked, diverting suddenly to a more serious question. "You see, there is no troop here, and it is such an opportunity for good scouting, with all the wilds of the ocean and cliffs, as a background. I feel perhaps, we should organize. Suppose we organize a summer troop of just our own girls? Margaret and Julia will be here this week, and you know many more from school will be down later."

"Oh let's call ourselves the Sea Gulls. Then we would have an excuse for taking rides in that airplane that goes up from the park," suggested the ever venturesome Grace.

"I'd like it," agreed Louise. "Then, too, we could wear our uniforms a lot, and I am sure I shall have to wear something to help out on cutting down laundry until real hot weather. Do you know, girls, there is no such thing as obtaining help? And our Susie insisted on getting married, so would not come down with us."

“And mother wouldn’t even try to get a perfectly strange maid,” said Cleo. “I don’t mind helping out by wearing a uniform on cool days, but I don’t believe I should enjoy doing a lot of housework. I would rather go scouting for maids,” she insisted.

“We might even do that,” replied Grace, “but now let’s hie to the next cottage. I think mine is next.”

It was so early in the season that not many of the summer places were open, but in almost every cottage workers were busy, opening the boarded windows, (all windows on the ocean side have to be boarded up to withstand the winter storms) fixing up the grounds, opening garages, and generally preparing for the summer influx.

“Here we are!” announced Grace, leading her companions up through the well groomed lawn, then under the rose arch over which the word “Rosabell” was wrought in rustic characters, with the rose vines threading in and out, and punctuating each letter with sprays of buds almost ready to bloom.

“Oh, isn’t that pretty!” enthused Cleo. “I believe the light dainty cottage is really prettier than our gloomy old log cabin.”

“And such porch furniture!” enthused Louise. “You can have a lovely scout meeting out here Grace. Let’s hurry and organize so

we can have a meeting," suggested Louise in sincere compliment to "Rosabell."

Within the cottage the rooms were all done in a chintz and hung in wonderful gauzy draperies, almost unknown to city houses, but quite indispensable to the summer resort.

"And wait until you see my room," Grace told her friends. "I am sure you will like it."

"Oh, a marine room," exclaimed Cleo, as they entered a corner all decorated with sea trophies, including star fish, the sword of a sword fish, tortoise shells, even fishing rods and queer tackle hung on the background of seine or fish net, that almost covered one side of the marine green walls.

"I chose this room although Benny wanted it," said Grace, "but I had first choice, so he got an extra play room over the garage, where boys' noise would not sound quite so telephonic," she ventured. "I wondered why people left this sort of thing up in a summer cottage, where usually, they say, things must be so sanitary and practical, but it seems the boy who owned them was a Jackie, and his mother wouldn't have the room disturbed."

"Sakes-a-live!" exclaimed Louise. "He may come in the window some night while taking a stroll in his seaplane, Grace. Better keep a screen in this lovely long window," she admonished.

"Oh, I shall, although I just love Jackies and

intend to make a lot of friends down at the life saving station. That is where we ought to be able to apply some choice scouting," said Grace, rearranging a row of green bound books, that, like everything else in the room, harmonized in the marine effect.

"Don't go turning crabbed, or getting fishy, or even mermaiding in this room, Grace," teased Cleo. "It is so effective I should rather fear the effect taking root. Just look at this real little alligator and he is actually strong enough to sit on! Did you ever see anything so cunning?" The real little alligator or crocodile was actually standing on his short hind legs, and in his front (shall we say paws?) he was holding a flat piece of wood that served for the seat of the queer stool. It was all very novel, and everyone decided "Rosabell" was one of the prettiest cottages in Sea Crest.

"And having decided to organize the Sea Gulls," Louise remarked, "I think this would be a particularly appropriate place to hold our initiations."

"But I thought Cleo had formed a pirate's league?" teased Grace. "Suppose our Captain Kidd fire-bug discovers who set off the beach barrel fuse, and comes around for vengeance some night? Whoo-pee!" and Grace demonstrated the revenge with an indescribable arm swing not listed in her Swedish movements.

"I do think that is sort of queer," commented

Cleo, "how that fire started, and the way it burned. Did any one smell oil? All big incendiary fires are oil soaked always, you know."

"It might have been oil or it might have been fish bones, but I did not notice any pungent odor," declared Louise. "And now for *my* cottage. I am afraid there are no thrills left, so don't be too much disappointed."

"I am sure we will have enough thrills to applaud you, Weasie dear," said Grace. "It is so nice to have you with us this year. Of course we are going to miss our baby Madaline, and it is a shame we cannot all come to such a lovely summer place, but having you along does compensate. And we are always hoping Madie will come later on. When will Julia and Margaret arrive?"

"Early next week," Louise replied, "and Julia has the loveliest new car."

"So have we, and so have you, and so has Cleo," replied Grace, rather discounting the glory of the first mentioned. "They may not all be quite as high-class as Julia's, but I am sure they are each perfectly first rate. Here is ours coming in just now. Let's hop in, and Lenore will run us over to your place, Weasie."

CHAPTER III

A COUPLE OF FREAKS

L EONORE, an o'der sister of the vivacious Grace, very willingly picked up the trio, and presently they were contrasting the ocean air as breathed at a speed rate along the ocean front, to the same air as gathered "by hand" from a stationary position.

"It's like drinking air," commented Cleo. "This is surely liquid air if there is any such commodity."

"I want to stop at Borden's for a paper," said their driver, Leonore. "Grace, will you kindly hop out and get it?"

The opportunity of inspecting the big pavilion which was just opened that day for the season, was eagerly grasped by all three girls, who promptly decided there were many and various things they all needed; all of which might be bought at Borden's, so they hopped out with conspicuous alacrity.

"Isn't this splendid!" enthused Grace, almost dancing across the well polished floor. "We will be sure to want a lot of ice cream this summer."

Over in a corner a queer looking girl was counting and recounting a lot of small change. First she would finger it from one hand to the other, almost counting aloud; then she would drop each coin on the table and its ring counted aloud for her. This attracted the attention of the Girl Scouts, who without speaking of it, were all watching the process with interest.

"Wealth," whispered Louise, "and newly acquired, I guess."

"Going to treat the world," said Cleo under her breath. "Too bad they are all out of balloons."

The girl had finally decided to spend one pile of the coins she had heaped before her, and the other she brushed into a little muslin bag, tied it with a black string and then stuck it carefully into the neck of her blouse. As if conscious she was being watched she shuffled awkwardly, then made her way to the end of the counter, where the one-time penny candies were sold.

"There!" exclaimed Cleo, when the girl was well out of hearing. "She is surely a queer character and worth watching. How do you suppose she ever came by that famous collection of modern coins?"

"Why, she earned them, I should say," guessed Louise. "That's the sort of girl always available for a mind-the-baby job."

As the girl waited to make her purchase she kept turning, very boldly, to stare at the scouts,

who were vainly trying to hide their interest in the queer character. Evidently *she* had no misgivings concerning her interest in them.

First she would shrug her shoulders, then tilt up her broken straw hat, kick the heel of one "sneak" against the other, until finally the clerk spoke sharply to bring her attention to the point of buying candy.

It took her some time longer to make her selection and again in counting out her money she made quite an unnecessary display. A spill of the coins brought an ill-concealed titter from Cleo and Grace, and this the girl so sharply resented that Louise edged her chums to the other side of the room for safety.

"Fierce!" commented Grace. "Think she bites?"

"Might," replied Cleo under her breath.

Louise was ordering stamps, and her friends pretended to examine the alluring display of new post-cards.

"Oh, my!" whispered Grace. "What is this we have come upon? Please look over in that far corner!"

They followed the direction indicated and saw there a very tall, awkward boy, pouring over a badly worn book, and making notes on a slip of yellow paper. He wore glasses, and possessed that queerly undefinable personality, usually ascribed to the gawky boy, or he who is different from others.

"Look!" begged Louise grasping the arms of Grace and Cleo. "He has the same kind of paper we found in the bottle!"

"Our fire-bug!" breathed Cleo, edging away in mock alarm. "Behold his avenger!" and she held aloft a pretty yellow lolly-pop lately chosen from the candy case.

The boy never noticed those about him, but literally poured over his book and dug notes out with a stubby pencil.

Meanwhile the girl with the bag of coins had procured her confections, and was now counting her change. As she passed the girls she looked boldly at them and actually stuck out her tongue!

Grace roared laughing. The outburst caused the boy in the corner to drop his pencil and stare.

Then Cleo laughed; Louise joined her, and all three bolted for the door.

"Oh, I thought I'd choke," gurgled Cleo. "Did you ever see such circus folks?"

"But the boy with the yellow paper may be writing us another letter," hazarded Grace. "We should have gone up boldly and confronted him."

"I was more interested in slip-shod Letty," said Louise. "She looked real daggers, and what about her threat? She almost shook her fist at us."

"Oh, she'll be sure to love us, that's certain,"

commented Cleo, "but I don't see why we should let her act so bold. We ran as if we were afraid of her."

"We were afraid of ourselves—thought we were going to get into a fit of laughing," admitted Grace.

"Come on," urged Louise. "Leonore will be out of patience."

"I thought you were going to buy the store out," said the waiting girl, impatiently pressing the self starter button and the car rumbled off.

"No danger," replied Grace. "But we saw the funniest folks," and she proceeded to tell of their near-encounter with the girl they named Letty, and then mentioned the glimpse they had of the queer, studious boy.

"A couple of freaks," said Leonore, as the car picked up speed. "There are plenty of them around here, and you little girl scouts better watch out. Some one may find you off your guard," she finished good naturedly.

When the girls settled down they exchanged opinions on the morning's experience. No little country coin collector could open fire on them that way, without paying some penalty. Not if they knew it.

"And think of her sticking her tongue out," exclaimed Grace. "Of all the rude tricks!"

"I do believe she would have punched me if she had dared," remarked Cleo.

"Well, she had better wait—just wait," said Louise with a threat in her voice. "We are sure to meet Letty again and then—just wait!"

"And the boy with the yellow paper," Cleo reminded her chums. "What about him?"

"There's plenty of yellow paper," replied Grace, "but of course he might be our fire-bug. He looked sort of unconscious."

"Didn't notice you looking at him, that *was* queer," teased Louise.

"Oh, I think I saw your gray eyes rolling over in his corner," fired back Grace.

"Not even the entire volley brought him to his senses," put in Cleo, "for I must admit *I* was looking over his way myself."

"Well, here we are. Thanks for the lift, Leonore," said Louise as the car stopped in front of the glistening white cottage, one of the show places of Sea Crest.

"Oh, how fine!" exclaimed Cleo. "Like Crystal Palace, so white and shiny."

And then began the third lap in their inspection of the summer cottages.

CHAPTER IV

MARGARET-BY-THE-DAY

WHY shouldn't we do it?" argued Margaret, who with Julia had joined her chums at Sea Crest. I think it would be just as much fun as playing a game, and heaps more useful."

"Mother would hardly allow us," drawled Cleo. "She might appreciate our courage, but to really try doing a washing!"

"Why not?" insisted Grace. "I'm just dying to try one of those motors. I think it would be almost as exciting as driving a car. Do let us Cleo. You know how it works."

"Yes, I know how to touch the button and turn on the switch, but how about making the starch?"

Everybody joined in the laugh that followed the admission of not knowing the common kitchen starch process, while having an idea of a modern electric appliance.

"That's what ails our domestic science class. We study the washing machine, but omit the starch," said Louise. "Well, suppose we do just that and don't bother with the stiffness."

Teased into compliance Cleo led her chums to the out-of-door laundry, which was built as a part of the bathing houses just off the kitchen.

It might have been the lure of the nice new, white washing machine, with its buzzing electric motor, but whatever the cause the girls finally succeeded in winning Cleo's permission that they try it.

"I'm going to be boss," insisted Margaret, rolling up her sleeves with more gusto than seemed necessary, for in the process her fist came in contact with Cleo's eye.

The friendly bout that followed delayed the washing somewhat, but the scouts were at least on their way.

They had the log cabin all to themselves; and the manner in which they took possession might have been taken to indicate they had the world to themselves, for they made quite as much noise as a real troop, instead of the prospective summer troop they were forming themselves into.

"Now first," ordered Margaret, giving her skirt a very effective but unnecessary hitch, "first we sort the clothes."

"Ye-s—" agreed Julia. "But h-o-w?"

"Why just sort them, of course," evaded Margaret.

"Into nice neat little heaps," offered Cleo, stretching out a sheet on the narrow floor, and

thereby doing deadly damage to the white muslin.

"I know that the table linen should be absolutely separate," declared Julia authoritatively, beginning on the small collection of table stuff. "Please Grace, fetch me the basket."

"I need the basket for my collection," objected Grace. "Mine is much the most. I have the underlies" she catalogued, holding up a dainty hand-made camisole that was surely never intended to enter an amateur washing contest.

"Lovely," exclaimed Louise, dropping a pair of silk hose into the neat little pile of table linen.

"There," cried Margaret. "We surely didn't undertake this as an inspection. Let's get right at the wash, Cleo, please put some water in the machine."

"However do you do that?" asked Grace in genuine awe, for plainly the washing machine was not connected with any water faucet.

"Why, I have to put that hose on that tub over there and fill it that way," proudly explained the wash-day hostess. "I should think, Margaret, if you are going to be boss you would understand something of the system," she joked.

"Oh, I just love to be Margaret-by-the-day," answered the self-appointed supervisor, "but even she, you remember, did not know all about

electric washing machines. Now let's see how the hose works."

But no need to see, they could *feel*, for the hose had slipped from its niche in the washing machine, and seemed to be pouring out volumes of water on everybody.

"Turn it off," shouted Louise, already pretty wet and surely getting wetter.

To save more direct contact Cleo had pointed the nozzle at the roof, and now a light shower was descending on the erstwhile washerwomen, and their pretty little piles of selected apparel.

Presently the faucet was reached and the hose properly directed into the cylinder, and while the water flowed in, Margaret put down the first batch, which was quite properly composed of the table linen.

"Now the washing powder," called Cleo. "Here it is all nicely stocked and ready. I think it should be very lightly sprinkled on."

"Oh no, never!" protested Louise. "That would simply eat holes in everything. You have to dilute it. I heard our maid say so."

"All right, I just as soon," agreed Cleo, giggling helplessly. "But go ahead and dilute. I'm having trouble enough here."

"Say," inquired Julia innocently. "I thought these electric washing machines did all the washing. Why don't they do it then?" and this afforded a new cause for laughter that simply demoralized the entire squad.

Finally Grace had diluted the washing powder and was pouring it over the linen, regardless of their lovely colored borders, that should never have known anything stronger than the purest soap. Then the cylinder cover was clapped on and fastened (Cleo understood the importance of this), and while all the girls stood at a safe distance she threw in the switch, and touched the button.

Thereat the Girl Scouts' washing went on as merrily as a merry-go-round at a picnic.

"We can go out and play croquet while it washes," announced Cleo grandly. "That's the beauty of these washers."

They agreed that was real beauty, and off they romped to the brand new croquet set, to try their skill at pegging balls under wire wickets.

"I think I'll go in and make the starch," Margaret proposed, as she missed a wire. "Those clothes will be done presently, and we mustn't wait too long between the acts. You know how tiresome that always is."

"Well, if you insist," replied Cleo. "You will find the starch where I got the powder. Just help yourself," and off went the practical Margaret, quite determined to earn her title of "boss."

But there were no directions on the starch box. That was queer thought the little scout, every box should carry its own directions. But

of course, it must be very simple to make starch.

One pours water on it surely, she did that. Then one cooks it—Margaret proceeded to do that, and before she could reach a spoon to stir the mass, the lovely white starch had congealed into a big bubbly pan cake, that wouldn't stir, wouldn't turn and wouldn't—do anything, but burn—and my, how it did burn!

"Looks like a real pudding," she told herself in desperation, trying frantically to move the mass from the bottom of the white enameled pan.

The odor of the burning starch brought her companions in on a run.

"What's the matter? Don't burn down the house," implored Grace. "My, that's worse than the fish cake Cleo burned in the mud hole in the woods. You don't make starch solid, Margy, you have to make it runny, all gooy like, don't you know?"

"Of course, I know," retorted Margaret, "but I didn't do this, it did itself. I had it all nice and gooy for about half a second, then it cemented into adamant. There! I hate starch!" she admitted, ending up in a gale of laughter that advertised defeat.

"Oh, run out and stop that motor Louise," called Cleo. "It has been running half an hour."

As the starch making process was being operated in the kitchen, and the machine was out in

the laundry, Louise left the former conference to attend to the latter requirement.

"Oh my!" shouted Louise, "Come here, it's shooting sparks all over!"

And just as she said, the motor was emitting a series of flashes that flew around with absolute disregard of aim or purpose.

It took sometime for Cleo to get up courage enough to touch the black button, and when finally the machine stopped the little group looked about at the ruin of their hopes.

Then they laughed, and laughed, and roared and laughed, until Julia ran over to her cottage, fairly kidnapped her own faithful maid, who, to save further disaster, came to the log cabin and reluctantly finished the unfortunate wash.

As the girls hung the pretty white garments on the line, they each decided to make a note of the fact that handkerchiefs and napkins are never starched, and that starch must first be thoroughly dissolved in cold water before boiling water is added. Also, that it is very important to have a spoon in one's hand and begin stirring as the pouring is begun.

But Margaret-by-the-day proved an interesting game, if it did slip a cog or two in its development.

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN DAVE

I WOULD never have believed that real scouts could have failed so miserably in a mere washing," complained Grace; "in fact, I am almost wondering if we should not go into ashes and broadcloth, and ask to be trained laundresses. It seems to me rather humiliating."

"Ashes and broadcloth," repeated Cleo thoughtfully. "Oh, you mean sackcloth and ashes. That's in a different department—Con Grazia, also a different priced goods. But I don't believe we need worry about the laundry work. Mother thought we were perfectly heroic to undertake the task, and she was pleased to death to see the lines of sparkling linens waving welcome to her as she hailed in from the train. Also, she admitted the same starch mistake we made, that of stiffening handkerchiefs when she first tried out the process. So perhaps that's a regular human weakness and not peculiar to raw scouts, rookies, I suppose I should say."

"I am so glad your mother approved, Cleo.

I feel better now. I must confess I was rather crestfallen after all our noble, heroic, spectacular stunts. But sufficient unto the day is the trouble thereof, as some one has remarked. Now Cleo, I want to tell you something," and she settled down deeper in the porch cushions at "Rosabell." Also she kicked off a new pair of pumps to remove pedal distractions. "You know Cleo, I have heard that a lot of small fires do start up mysteriously around here. And no one has been able to run down the fire bug. I heard some men down at the Post Office talking about a run the fire department had last night. Away out some place just for a chicken coop. They seemed peeved, as Louise would say. Now I feel we have a clue in that bottle note, but after all our other experiences perhaps it would be better for just you and me to go at the mystery first. More hands always seem to me like more mixups."

"Really, Grazia, you alarm me with your wisdom," replied Cleo, affixing a very foolish giggle to the alarm signal. "I just wonder what will happen if you go getting so mighty wise all of a sudden. But I do think you are right just the same. Many hands mean mighty mixups. That's alliteration. You see I'm sticking to lit."

"I wish you would stick to common sense, Cleo. I am not wishing any hard work on the scouts for this glorious summer, but I feel, I

instinctively feel, as Julia says, there is something queer to curiosity in the fire-bug business. Also, I have found my old Jack Tar friend, that I promised myself when we came down. And he is captain of the Life Saving Station just as I planned. Only—well—it really isn't essential, but his whiskers are not quite as long as I planned them to be. But Cleo, I want you to meet old Neptune. His name is Dave Dunham, and he seems to love me already. Come on down and have a talk with him. He has a place like a scene in an old fashioned drama."

"I'd love to go, Grace, and I am just keen on an ocean breeze this A. M. So gather up your pumps, also your feet, and let us away," decided Cleo.

The weather was still cool, and true to their promise the girls were wearing their scout uniform, all khaki, with the thin blouse, so that running along to the life saving station they seemed quite a part of the picture. The real marine sky—that green blue with white clouds as soft as the very foam they roll over, gave the day a finish fit for the true artist's eye, but Cleo and Grace did not stop to admire the tints and tones, whether marine or general seascape.

"How cozy," whispered Cleo as they stepped into the front room of the station, which was fitted up with such comforts as might be essential to the life of the Coast Guard. The big round pot stove was obviously the most con-

spicuous thing in the room, and beside it such furniture as the long table with its faded red cover, the big wooden chairs, with bindings of wires and telegraph glasses for castors (rheumatic cures, we recall), all these articles fell into the shadows of that big round stove, with its new coat of shiny black iron paint.

"Captain Dave!" called Grace, after looking about for the host. "Are you in?"

"Sure thing, I'm in, right here, comin'," returned a voice which preceded the figure of Captain Dave.

"Good morning, Captain," Grace greeted him. "This is my chum, Cleo Harris, you remember I spoke of her. We are all Girl Scouts, you know," as he eyed the uniform and both girls raised their hand in salute. "Maybe you can give us something to do with all of your life lines, and buoys and such things. We don't know much about life saving on the deep, although we have tried it on dry land," said Grace.

"Welcome," said the old sailor simply. "We don't have hard work this time of the year, but we need the rest after winter. This was a heavy one. More storms than in thirty years," he declared, pulling out two of the heavy wooden chairs, running his hand over them to make sure they were free from dust, then indicating the girls should make themselves comfortable, while he proceeded to occupy a still larger

chair that commanded a view of the sea from the broad window.

"Captain, what do you think of all those small fires we hear folks talking about?" asked Grace in her direct way. "Do you suppose some mischievous boys are starting them?"

The captain turned his head to the direction in which he was emitting his clouds of smoke, paused for a minute, then shook his head.

"I dunno," he replied. "I know most of the youngsters around here, and I've never known them to do a thing like that. There was seven good hens burned in that little fire last night, and old Dick Malloney has to depend on selling eggs to get his coffee. It's a shame!" and he allowed his heavy chair to spring forward with a pronounced thud.

"We have only been down a week," remarked Cleo, "but I have noticed smoke almost every morning out in those woods over the river. I suppose some one lives that way, do they?"

"You mean on the island," he explained. "That's Weasle Point, sticks out into the bay and just west is the island; not more than a clump of trees on a few rocks, but big enough to stand the wear, so it is called Luna Land, but children make it Looney Land," he explained. "A couple of huts in there, but no place for you girls to go visitin'," he finished, as if divining the plan already shaping itself in the minds of Grace and Cleo—a trip to Looney Land.

“Why Looney Land?” asked Cleo. “Queer folks out there?”

“Dunno as any folks is out there, but places get named somehow, just like they get trees, no plantin’ just come that way. Looney Land doesn’t mean anything that I know of except the moon seems to set over there. But one thing I do know,” and he made this very plain, “it’s a good place for girls to keep away from.”

Grace and Cleo exchanged glances. It occurred to each that the forbidden land was very apt to become attractive, but neither said so, nor asked how Looney Land was to be reached.

“You have awful storms in winter, don’t you?” asked Cleo, fingering an oil skin coat, and noticing the big shiny hat that hung with it on a wooden peg. “And I suppose you have wrecks occasionally.”

“Yes, more than we enjoy,” replied Captain Dave. “Had a bad one two years ago. See that little pole stickin’ up out there beyond the pier? That’s all that’s left of the Alameda, and a fine vessel she was, too.”

“Lives lost?” asked Grace mechanically.

“Oh, yes indeed, yes indeed,” replied the captain. “Some folks around here yet that was thrown ashore from that wreck. I mind one light haired woman, and a youngster—little girl. We took them in here from the line, you know how we swing the rings out on the line, and draw the poor things in? Well

this woman was so frozen we could hardly get the child from her arms. She died next day, just as we got her to the hospital."

"What was her name—the girl's name, I mean?" asked Grace, interested now that "life" had been discovered in the specter of the wreck.

"Oh, some simple name—don't know as I recall it rightly. They usually tag on another. We have quite a few folks pass in and out of this station in thirty years—I've been here more than that, and I don't keep no record of my visitors. They are mostly glad to come and glad to go," and the captain lighted a fresh pipe, by way of turning over a new leaf in his story.

"I suppose there were the usual papers for the little girl from the wreck," prompted Cleo. "They always turn out to be somebody of account, lost at sea and found years later on land. You know how stories have a way of shaping themselves, Captain," she apologized, "and I am sort of interested in stories."

"You'll find plenty around here, without concocting them," the seaman promised. "Not a broken oar in that loft but is a record of some boy's courage, and not a boat do we break up for firewood but with it goes many a story of heroism that never was printed," he added eloquently.

"And you think we ought to keep away from

Looney Land?" Cleo forced herself to ask, being a trifle reticent about recalling the question Captain Dave had so decisively spoken upon.

"Oh, I don't know as there's any great harm in the little splash of an island," he replied. "But when young 'uns keep saying 'look out' and 'don't go near,' I allus' believe they know what they're talking about. I hain't never hearn any grown up say rightly the place is pested, in any way, but the young 'uns just naturally shuns it, and kids often make a mighty good barometer—can tell when a gale is brewin'."

At this the captain showed signs of having some work to do, so the girls arose and thanked him for his hospitality. They had enjoyed the visit, and on leaving, captain Dave promised to let them see a life drill some afternoon.

"Isn't that queer about Looney Island?" asked Grace, directly they reached the board walk. "Luna Land is a pretty enough name, especially as Captain Dave says the moon sets over there, but 'Looney Land' is different," she declared. "We will surely have to explore those parts, Cleo, even if we do have to take a life saver's kit along with us."

"And did you notice Weasle Point? Of course our fire-bug must belong somewhere out in that sand-bar, and just as much of course, we will have to find out all about the queer diggin's. Better not tell Julie, she is so nervous, and I'm

sure Margaret would want to fetch along our only two town police officers, she is so practical. There they are—the girls, I mean. See them just turning around ‘B’ street? Coo-ee—Whoo-ee!” called Cleo, her hand cupped to her lips to send out the yodle.

Cutting across the little stretch of green that bound Glimmer Lake, Margaret and Julia were soon on the board walk.

“Oh listen!” shouted Julia. “Listen!” she repeated in that useless way girls have of holding off news.

“We are listening, of course,” replied Grace, “but get your breath or you’ll choke. What’s the excitement?”

“That funny girl with the tongue,” Margaret managed to say, before Julia could get her breath. “She’s the queerest thing. She followed us all the way from the village. We turned corners, and so did she; we hurried, and she hurried, and when we stopped, she stopped. Isn’t that too impudent for words? I think we ought to report her,” declared the indignant Margaret.

“Report her for ‘doing the things we do?’” laughed Cleo. “Why, Margaret, who would think you were a first class scout? I’m surprised,” and the girl’s voice mimicked the severe tones of a prim elder.

“Just the same,” Julia insisted, “I can’t see why she should be allowed to plague us and

molest us in the streets.” Julia was not quite sure “molest” was the word, but it had an important sound and all the girls seemed impressed by it.

“Aren’t we special officers?” protested Grace. “Why shouldn’t we do our own—our own policing? Let’s form ourselves into a squad, and track down the culprit,” and she rolled her tongue, as well as her eyes.

“Let us sit down and talk it over,” suggested practical Margaret. “I’m ready to drop from all the paces we made samples of to suit our trailer.”

“Where did she go?” asked Cleo.

“Ducked into a little shanty with a laundry sign on the fence,” replied Julia, “and we were so glad to be rid of her we just raced all the way down B street.”

“And look!” said Margaret. “There’s our other hero. The boy with the books. See, he is making for a quiet bench, and look! That’s yellow paper sticking out of his pocket. Let’s watch him! Maybe he will get our bottle letter.”

But the studious boy with the books and papers made straight for the bench, and finding a seat proceeded to read. He didn’t even notice the girls when they brushed past him.

CHAPTER VI

CRABS AND DISASTER

ARE you perfectly sure it is safe?" asked Cleo. "Seeing the bottom here doesn't mean we can see it all the way across."

"Why, you could walk across the river, really," replied Louise. "Even at high tide it's not more than a big pond."

"Oh, do come on," begged Grace. "Think of catching crabs."

"But who knows how to row?" demanded the cautious Cleo.

"I do!" called Margaret. "I always rowed out in the pond at Flosston."

"And so do I," insisted Julia. "We go to Lake George sometimes, and I have tried rowing in the smaller streams there."

"And I have always known how to row," replied Louise emphatically.

"That being the case I suppose I must make the crabbing party unanimous," capitulated Cleo, "although I should not enjoy a spill out here so near the inlet."

"We will go up stream, the other way," conceded Louise, delighted at the prospect of their crabbing party. "Come on, here is where we hire our boat, and get our crabbing outfit."

Down to the landing that jutted out into the shallow Round River, the girls hurried to procure their fishing outfit.

"A flat bottomed boat," urged Cleo.

"All right," agreed Louise. "But any big boat will do. There are four of us. One basket and four poles," she ordered from the prim little gray haired woman who kept the stand at the landing.

"And bait," went on Louise, while the other girls marveled at her marine intelligence.

"Oh, what smelly stuff?" sniffed Grace, taking the basket and holding it out at arm's length.

"That's the bait," explained Louise.

"I'm never going to eat fish as long as I live," resolved Cleo. "Each time I meet it it smells worse."

"The same fish naturally would," joked Louise. "But this is only bait Cleo—bait, don't you know what that means?" she teased, swinging the obnoxious basket up to a line with Cleo's face, where avoiding the odor would be impossible.

A boy was unfastening their boat, and he placed the oars in the locks just as the girls reached the water's edge.

"Don't tip," cautioned Julia. "We could at least get wet, even in this shallow water."

Grace and Margaret took the oars, and soon the crabbing party was gliding out among the few vacationists who were taking advantage of the pleasant afternoon on the water.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Cleo. "There are the crabs! Where's our bait and things?"

"We have to load up first," explained Louise, assuming the role of fisherman. "Get your lines out, look out! Don't tangle them."

"But how do we hook them?" asked Julia, who was gingerly affixing an unfortunate little "shiner" on her line, to serve as bait for the foolish, greedy crab.

"We don't hook them, we catch them in the nets," further explained Louise. "I came out with daddy last week."

"Oh, no wonder you are so wise," said Cleo, struggling with her line. "I simply couldn't imagine what degree of scouting you learned to fish in; because I didn't."

"We recall what a lovely time you had in Allbright woods," Grace reminded Cleo. "But then it was at cooking fish you especially qualified," she added referring to an incident related in "The Girl Scout Pioneers."

"Oh, yes. My explosive mud ball!" assented Cleo. "But this is different. Ugh! I shall never, never brag of clean hands again after

this. There, my fish is tied on the sinker; now what do I do, Weasie?"

"Don't rock the boat, that is always first and last orders," replied her chum, "and next, just throw your line out in any direction you choose."

"Oh, I see. You just guess where the crabs are," replied Cleo, quite interested, as her bait was leaving port, so to speak. "There! That's the best part of the fun—taking aim," and she gracefully tossed her flying line out into the water.

The other girls had likewise "cast," and now all were patiently waiting for a bite.

"Now, when you feel a pull," advised Louise, "just bring it up and slip your net in quietly, and scoop up Mr. Crab. There! I've got one! Now watch!"

Just as she had ordered the others to do, Louise now scooped up her net, and in came a good sized blue crab.

"Oh, look out," cried Grace. "Crabs bite fearfully. Louise, you are not going to turn that thing loose in this little boat?" she wailed.

"Don't worry Grace; he goes right in his little basket. There!" and with a skillful motion Louise did turn the squirming shell fish into the basket.

"He's crawling out!" shrieked Julia. "Oh, we should have a cover for the basket."

"No," Margaret said, shaking the basket and

thus settling the nervous crab. "He can't get out. He is just exercising. My, how clawy he is! How many like that would it take to make a meal?"

"Quite a few I should think," replied Cleo. "For I know we don't eat the shell. But this is fun. Let me have another try. My turn to land one now," and again she cast out and patiently waited a bite.

The next shout of victory, however, came from Julia's end of the boat, and she presently landed a very large crab, so large and lively in fact, that all four girls helped to get him in the basket.

"Now, they'll fight," murmured Margaret. "See the way they claw each other."

"Come on girls," called Louise. "We'll never fill our baskets if we hold an autopsy over every catch. Here! I've got another," and into the basket went another unfortunate.

"It's just like a game, and I think the chance of grabbing one is as good fun as grabbing at Cross Tag," Cleo remarked. "Oh, there's one, Grace; look at your line dragging!"

And so it went on until the crabs were piling up in the basket and threatening to get out, in spite of the sea weed that was heaped on much thicker than necessary, according to the opinion of Louise.

So intent were the girls on their crabbing game they had not noticed the other craft drift-

ing about them. Suddenly Grace pulled so hard at Cleo's sleeve she almost lost a catch in the attempt.

"Look!" begged Grace. "Over in that boat! Wise Willie, the boy with the book."

They all paused to observe the graceful green bark, in which was seated the boy with the book, as Grace described him. And as usual the book was very much in evidence.

In fact, his oars lay in their locks, and he was drifting aimlessly as if the river were his, instead of the earth, according to Monte Cristo.

"Let's give him a scare and see if he is alive," suggested Cleo.

"Suppose we row up to him and ask him if he knows where the Weasle lives," proposed Grace.

"Oh, please don't," implored Julia, who showed signs of nervousness. "Why should we disturb him—he's only reading?"

"Oh, you like Wise Willie," teased Margaret. "Here's a flower from my belt, toss it to him, Julia."

But in spite of their joking the boy in the boat, all unconscious of the attention he was the center of, merely drifted on, until first one oar, then the other slipped out of the boat, and floated down the river.

"I believe he is unconscious," Grace continued to joke. "Now, of course, we have to rescue his oars."

"Why?" asked Julia innocently.

"Or tow him in, if you would rather, Jule," suggested Louise. "Don't you realize we are bound by traffic laws to assist a stranded boatman?"

"But he isn't stranded, and he doesn't need help," replied Julia with a show of something like temper. "Why should we speak to a strange boy?" she demanded.

"And why shouldn't we?" fired back Cleo. "If he isn't stranded it is because he hasn't struck the strand yet; just watch him."

They dropped their nets and watched the boy, who, bent over his book, drifted along without the least sign of regard for his situation.

Meanwhile the oars had drifted farther and farther away. A passing motor boat swelled the tide to a current and this washed them almost out of sight of the watchers.

"Being a boy we hesitate to hail him," said Louise. "Now, if that were a girl——"

"Oh, if it were," interrupted Julia, with a meaning tone.

"All the same the poor boy may be late for dinner," said Grace foolishly. "Let's hail him!" and she cupped her hands to her lips.

"Please don't," begged Julia. This objection brought forth a perfect volley of cynicism.

Finally, Cleo took up one oar, and Margaret the other, and they proceeded in the direction of the floating propellers. As they passed the

boy's boat, the girls spoke loudly of "some one losing his oars," but even this did not arouse him.

"Maybe we'll have to row him home," said Grace. "He doesn't look as if he cared much whether he ever gets back to land or not."

It took but a few moments to get his oars, and again the girls turned up stream.

"Who is going to give them to him," asked Louise, with a foolish giggle.

"We are noble scouts—we are!" mocked Cleo. "Mine be the task! A-hem!" and here a fit of laughter spoiled the proposed effect.

"Here are your oars!" called Grace, before the others could realize what she was about. But no boy answered.

"Say!" yelled Margaret, taking courage from Grace. "Say, boy! Here are your oars!" Still no answer.

Louise took an oar and gave the drifting boat a vigorous shove.

At this the boy did look up, and for a moment he seemed to comprehend; then he jumped up so suddenly he toppled over into the water between the two boats!

"Oh, mercy!" cried the girls, in one voice.

"The river is deep enough here!" exclaimed Louise. "Give him an oar to climb on."

A sudden scream from the boy in the water brought the melancholy news that he could not swim! His boat drifted off as quickly as it

was freed from his weight, and the girls were not quite near enough to reach him.

"Hurry, hurry!" begged Louise, who was now rowing. "He may sink, then what would he do?"

But the boy was splashing around making a brave attempt to keep up, and really doing so by the flat handed action with which he patted the water.

All embarrassment was now forgotten, as the scouts pulled up carefully to where the boy was just bobbing up and down, each movement adding to his peril.

"Climb in!" commanded Louise as they reached him. But he could scarcely put his hand to the oar, and the girls noticed his face was blue white.

"Oh, dear me!" cried Julia, "he is fainting or something," and nervous though she was, it was she who managed to get the first grip on the weakened boy.

It was no easy matter to get him into the boat; he was struggling and gasping for breath, and could make very little effort to help himself. Finally, when all four girls had succeeded in keeping the boat balanced and dragging him into it, he gave one painful gasp, closed his eyes, and sank into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER VII

A DIFFICULT SITUATION

WHERE shall we take him?" asked Grace in dismay.

"To the landing," replied Cleo, who still rowed with Margaret, while Julia clung to the stern of the boat in horror.

The boy looked so lifeless! Could he be dead?"

As he lay there his delicate features seemed more than death-like; they seemed dead!

"Oh, mercy, do hurry!" pleaded Grace. "Let me help you pull," she asked, getting hold of Margaret's oar.

The small boat was now over crowded, and it was with difficulty the girls managed to give the boy sufficient room.

"Can't we call any one?" suggested Julia.

"Not any one in sight now," replied Louise. "We spent more time than we imagined. See, it is sun down."

"But what made him go like that?" Margaret whispered. "He had only been in the water a few minutes."

"Maybe the fright," said Cleo, noticing how high the lad's forehead was, and with what evident care he had been dressed. His glasses were still on, and the sunset made ghostly shadows on his face.

"I'm so glad he didn't topple over when I touched his boat," said Louise. "I should have thought it all my fault, if he had."

"Nonsense," replied Grace. "He was bound to fall overboard. He did not seem to know he was on the water. But isn't it too bad there is no one around to call? Every one is gone now."

They rowed as vigorously as their young arms could serve the strokes, and it took but a few moments to get out in a straight line for the pier.

As the girls came within hailing distance of the dock the captain there, seeing something was wrong, hurried to the steps to meet them.

"What's this? What happened?" he asked.

"He fell overboard. Oh, please hurry to revive him," pleaded Julia. "He looks so death-like."

Leaning over the boat the man picked the frail boy up in his arms and carried him up the pier as quickly as it was possible to do so.

"He moved. Look!" called Julia. "See, he is moving! Oh, I am so glad he is not dead."

"He could hardly have died," replied Louise, thus reassuring her nervous companions.

"Still, I am glad to see he does move. Do you think we should follow them up there?"

"Oh, see the crowd gathering," exclaimed Margaret. "We can't do anything to help. Let's row out and bring in his boat. We would attract a lot of foolish attention up there."

This was considered the best plan, and without being noticed the girls pulled out again, and only watched the excitement from the distance. Presently they heard an automobile start off from the pier and at this the crowd was seen to disperse.

"I guess they are taking him home in a car," said Cleo. "Dear me, do you suppose it was our fault that he fell overboard?"

"Why, no indeed," protested Margaret. "But we saved him. He might easily have been lost if we hadn't. Somehow he seemed half asleep. He might have really been sleeping. Boys often do that while out rowing."

They managed to catch the drifting boat, and Grace got in this to row. As she did so she could not help observing a number of folded slips of yellow paper that lay tossed aside, in the bottom of the boat. But Grace had no thought of scrutinizing them. Somehow such an act would seem like spying.

Briskly both boats were now rowed back to the landing. No one was near, and when the

scouts turned in their oars and paid for their boat, only a boy was at the stand.

"Was he hurt?" asked Cleo eagerly.

"Oh no, just scared. He's all right," replied the boy handing out some change.

"Who is he?" asked Grace frankly.

"Oh, a chap that lives at the Point—don't know his name. He's awful quiet and queer—just reads his eyes out—no wonder he wears goggles," finished the clerk, turning to pop a soda for a waiting customer.

The girls breathed easier. Somehow they were each conscious of a dread, and the boy's report had dispelled it as if by magic.

"Oh, say!" he called after them as they were moving away. "Are you the girls who rescued him? Well, he especially warned me to get your names?" This was in question.

"But we shouldn't like to have him bother thanking us," returned Cleo, as spokesman. "We only did a scout duty."

"Oh yes, that's so. You're scouts. Aren't you? I'm a scout too, but we haven't any girls' troop around here. Wish you would start one."

"We may," assented Margaret. "But did you talk to the boy after he revived? Was he perfectly all right?" she questioned pointedly.

"Guess so, but he's a queer chap. Can't tell whether he's all right or all wrong, he's such a stick. Excuse me, here's where I sell a real

order," and he hurried over to an old lady who was vainly trying to shut an obstinate parasol.

Again the girls turned away, and the clerk had not fulfilled his promise to get their names; neither had they obtained the name of the stricken boy.

"But I feel a lot better," admitted Cleo. "Somehow, it isn't nice to see a boy as still as he was."

"I should say not," added Grace. "And I couldn't help thinking of Benny. I've never seen him still in his life, but I don't ever want to see him as quiet as that. And say, girls—" and she drew as many of them to her as her arms would reach, "the bottom of that boat was full of *yellow* paper rolls!"

"He couldn't be the fire-bug!" protested Louise.

"I don't believe he could either," went on Grace, now really serious. "But I thought I ought to mention about the papers."

"And the boat man's boy said he lived over on the island," mused Cleo. "I'm glad we got out of leaving our names. He might come around to thank us—and he might carry—a torch!"

This sally revived the girls' spirits to the extent of producing the first laugh they had enjoyed since the accident; and to demonstrate the possible torch bearing, Cleo paraded on ahead with a long stick up-raised, while Grace

and Louise followed with the crabs squirming in their basket.

"Now, we shall divide the spoils," said Margaret, when the town was reached, and the group should separate for their respective cottages.

"How many are there?" queried Cleo.

"Any one may have my share," offered Julia. "I don't ever want to see a crab again as long as I live," and her face fell to positive freezing point.

"Now, Julie dear, don't take on so," teased Grace. "No telling what our Wise Willie may turn out to be, and just think—you held his foot when we dragged him in."

"Grace, just you stop, I am nervous," pleaded Julia, "and I didn't hold his foot, it was his hand."

If Julia was really nervous, the laugh and merry-making that followed her naïve remark must certainly have dispelled the quakes, for presently she was shaking with laughter rather than with nerves.

"But the crabs!" insisted Grace. "Let's draw for them," and she dragged the girls over to a little terrace where they unceremoniously squatted down.

"Here are nice long and short straws," offered Louise, breaking off some tall grass ends. "Julia, you can say which wins, long or short?"

"Please don't ask me to decide anything about those crabs," protested Julia. "And if you don't mind I'll just run along. Mother expects folks to dinner. I had a lovely time—" she stopped to allow the girls' laugh time to penetrate. Force of habit in "having a good time" seemed too absurd now, when all were just recovering from the accident shock.

"Oh, we know what you mean, Julia," teased Grace. "You had a lovely time holding Willie's foot—hand I mean, I forgot it was his hand."

But Julia was off, down the avenue, her light hair floating like a cloud about her shoulder, and her slim figure—the girls called it svelt—still proclaiming her the little girl, in spite of her grown up manners. Every one liked Julia; she was pensive and temperamental, but distinctively individual withal.

"No use my winning those crabs," said Margaret, "we haven't any one to shell them, or cook them, or do anything with them."

"You can put them in a tub of water and let them grow up," suggested Cleo, drawing a long straw, when a short one would decide the crabs.

"There, Louise, you have them. Take them! I hope they make you a lovely salad, and that they don't make you sick."

CHAPTER VIII

AT WEASLE POINT

I SN'T it queer how no one seems to know any one else?" remarked Grace, with more words than meaning.

"You mean every one seems a stranger to every one else," added Cleo, affecting the same ambiguity.

"Yes; to put it collectively, the whole town is being populated by rank 'furriners,'" said Louise, "but I can explain the analogy. You see, when summer comes the natives pack up and leave their homes to rent them profitably. That means only the post-master, and store keepers stay put."

"I have asked more questions and got fewer answers since I came to Sea Crest than I would have believed possible to ask and not receive," declared Cleo. "But what is your special trouble, Grace?"

"I asked a couple of girls who our queer Letty was and they didn't know. Now, they were barefoot and peddling clams, the kind they dig up in the sand, and does it seem possible they would not know that girl?"

"They may come in from another town," suggested Louise. "It is quite possible they wouldn't know a thing but clams. I have found that out. But let's hurry off. I've got the lunch, and we are not to go farther than the Point. I have learned that girls go out there with perfect safety, and there's a nice little ice cream place tended by a perfectly prim, gray-haired lady, who keeps an eye all over the Point. It must be a very small point, or the woman must have a long distance eye," finished Louise.

"We are going in the launch, of course," asked and answered Cleo. "I had to assure mother that the man who runs it has a brand new license, and I almost promised to bring back the number. Mother is so afraid of all sorts of motors."

Ready for the excursion to Weasle Point, Grace, Cleo, and Louise, garbed in their practical scout uniforms and armed with fishing rods and a lunch box, started off in time to take the River Queen on its first trip of the afternoon. A few other passengers embarked with the girls; a mother with a small son and daughter, two business men, and the boy with supplies for the island fruit stand.

This number seemed to satisfy the captain who, after counting heads, started off. Across the river, then into the bay that widened as it neared the ocean, the River Queen glided grace-

fully over to the little strip of land jutting out, with its clump of deep green pines, and the ever present picnic sign.

"Isn't this lovely?" exclaimed Louise. "I am so sorry Julia had to go to the city."

"And that Mary is not down yet," added Cleo, "but we can come again. It's a perfectly lovely sail."

Landing at the improvised dock the girls quickly found the most secluded corner of the little grove, and although they had lunched at home, the sail was a potent appetizer, and the proposed spread was eagerly arranged.

It was very quiet on the strip of sand selected by the little party. Like a narrow ribbon the Point lay on the waters, and the deeper woodlands were evidently unpopular and little traversed, for not even a path greeted the scouts in their rambles.

"I wonder why the place is called Weasle Point?" questioned Cleo. "Are we supposed to hunt weasels out here?"

"I don't even know what the beast looks like," replied Grace. "Are they bearish or wolfish?"

"Neither, they are little snappy things that eat birds," said Louise. "I've heard daddy tell of them—he's quite a hunter, you know. But I don't fancy we will be attacked."

They had disposed of their lunch, and were exploring. All sorts of odd growing things

were discovered, from the almost invisible wintergreen, that hugs the earth as if fearful of standing alone, to the wide spreading sweet fern, that lords it over every other green thing under the trees.

More than once shouts of "Snake!" were sent up, and each time this proved to be a false alarm, or the snake must have made good its escape, for no horrible crawling reptile came to view, in spite of the most desperate thrashing of bushes, and beating of brush, following each alarm.

"Oh, see here!" called Louise, who had wandered some distance from her companions. "Here is the dearest little dove, eating our lunch crumbs. He carried them out here to safety."

Quietly the girls stole up to a pretty soft spot in the thicket, and there found a little pigeon enjoying the last crumbs of Cleo's cake. Although the approach meant some more crackling of leaves and sticks, the bird seemed not the least disturbed, in fact, as the scouts looked down he looked up with a perky twist of his graceful throat.

"Must be tame," suggested Louise. "I hope those children down by the water don't come romping up to scare him off."

Cautiously Grace approached in that steady, definite manner that always seems to mean still motion. The bird hardly fluttered, but when

the girl threw out a few more crumbs, he proudly hopped toward her.

"He has something tied to his leg," said Grace, keeping her voice down to almost a murmur. "I believe he is a carrier pigeon."

"Surely," agreed Louise, for the tiny speck on the bird's leg was plainly an aluminum strip such as marks the carrier bird.

The same thought flashed through the mind of each—who would be sending private messages through that grove!

"I suppose we wouldn't dare look at the note," said Grace. "They are always in a piece of gelatine under the wing."

"My, no," replied Cleo, "that would be equivalent to robbing the mails."

"But this mail seems to want robbing," said Louise quietly, "just see how he waits? Maybe this is his station."

So intent were they on watching the dove they did not hear an approaching step. It came so stealthfully, creeping along the soft marshy ground, scarcely a sound broke the woodland stillness; only the voices of children down at the landing, giving evidence of other life than that of the Girl Scouts on the island.

"Oh see!" said Grace. "This leg is hurt. Perhaps that is why he doesn't fly off," and noticing for the first time that the bird hopped on one slender leg, Grace stepped up nearer to examine the injury. As she did a voice sound-

ed just back of the group, and a very sharp voice it was.

"Hey there! You leave that bird alone!" came the shrill order.

Turning, they confronted the girl they had privately named Letty.

"Oh, is he your bird?" asked Louise confidently. "He seems to be injured, and we thought we might help fix the injury."

"Oh, yes, you did," sneered the girl. "A whole lot you thought that. Guess you had an eye on Lovey's mail bag. Here Lovey!" she sort of cooed to the bird. The change in her voice was remarkable. It softened to a caress as she stooped to pick up the little carrier pigeon.

First she looked at the leg, which, it appeared, had been hurt, but was mending. Assuring herself this was all right the child perched the bird on her shoulder and stood there a picture for the eye of an artist.

Standing at a little distance the girls regarded her cautiously. There she stood in her bare feet, with a tattered dress, her hair cropped out as if cut with a single snip of a powerful scissors, and that pretty bird perched contentedly on her shoulder!

After satisfying her inclination for this unconscious pose, she cuddled the bird in the crook of her arm, and again confronted the girls

"You don't ever want to interfere with any-

thing around here," she warned, assuming again the high pitched voice. "And if you don't run away you might miss your boat."

"Oh, we wouldn't mind," Grace had courage to say. "We are not afraid of the woods, and it's early yet. There seem to be other people here who have to get back to Sea Crest."

"Snoopin' eh?" sneered the girl again. "Well, you want to watch out. You're the smarties that tried to drown Bentley, ain't you?"

"Who said we ever tried to drown any one?" demanded Cleo, stepping up to the girl, whose bare feet looked almost black, and whose short hair stood around her face with the wildest effect—almost Fiji, the girls thought.

"Well, I ain't saying Bentley did," she answered, "but some one did, and you better be gettin'."

"Seems to me you are not very polite," said Louise. "Here we offer to help you fix up your bird, and you try to chase us," she declared. "Well, we are in no hurry, and don't you go saying anything about us drowning folks, do you hear?" and Louise surprised herself with her courage. "We saved a boy from drowning the other day, and were glad to do it, but we had nothing to do with the accident, and it won't be well for any one to spread malicious reports about us either!"

Had the other scouts dared they would have

applauded, but the occasion demanded different tactics.

"Oh, ain't you smart! I suppose you're scouts too, in them rigs. Maybe you'll go tattlin' on me and try to have me 'pinched.' Well, there ain't nobody 'round here dasts to touch me, so you needn't bother."

"We had no idea of tattling on you, but it seems you have taken a lot of trouble to bother us, since we came," retorted Cleo.

"And you was down on the beach when the barrel went off and burned some of the guards things, wasn't you?" she went on, ignoring the charge Cleo had made. "You know they're after the firebug, an' you better watch out!"

This seemed too much. The girls fairly fumed with indignation.

"Yes, we were down there, and nearly got burned with the way that barrel went up," fired back Grace as quickly as she could get her breath, "but we don't know anything about the firebug *yet*. But we are going to. Do you know who the Weasle is?" she asked indignantly.

"The Weasle!" and the girl burst into a choppy laugh. "Me, know who the Weasle is?" she repeated again. "That's a good 'un. Why don't you ask Bentley?" and before they realized her intention she stooped for the empty lunch box, and with her free hand threw it full force at Louise's head. Dodging it Louise was

ready to start after the creature, but before she could do so they saw her reach the water's edge, jump into a skiff and row swiftly away.

"Talk about cyclones," began Cleo, when she had recovered from her surprise. "Whatever do you call that human tornado?"

"We don't call her," replied Grace. "I just think we ought to make a complaint about her. Think of her saying we tried to drown a boy!"

"I'll tell you," said Louise soberly. "She isn't right in her mind."

"But right enough to make a lot of trouble for folks," retorted Cleo. "There she goes now for Looney Point. Maybe that's what Captain Dave warned us to keep clear of."

"Let's get down among the other people," suggested Grace. "It's a little too lonely up here."

"And I guess we had better take the next boat back," added Louise. "Something might just happen that we would be left."

When they reached the dock the launch was about ready to start, and piling in they soon found themselves again facing Sea Crest Pier.

So the afternoon had been one of surprise and disappointment.

CHAPTER IX

THE FIRE AT THE PIER

WE must have a regular scout meeting," announced Cleo. "We may get into trouble if we are not careful. Grace, have you rounded up all the True Treds?"

"I have," replied Grace, raising her finger in salute to the emergency captain. "They'll all be here at Rosabell, by eleven. And having Mary and Helen will give us a small troop."

"That's splendid. Mary and Helen are Tenderfoots, of course, but they know the duties. I can scarcely believe that girl would actually say the things we heard her say, and then to throw that box at Louise!"

"Just the same as pulling faces at us the first day we met her," said Grace. "I don't feel we ought to take her seriously. But you know there was another fire out Koto way last night, and it spoiled some lovely trees. Father says every one is so indignant about it, but never a person is found around to give a clue to the culprit."

"And she insinuated that we made the beach fire," said Cleo indignantly.

"Oh, that's pure nonsense, of course. But did you see how she acted when we asked her about the Weasle?"

"Yes, she knows about that note, I'm sure," said Cleo. "But then she thinks she knows a lot of things. She certainly lives over on the Island, and so she couldn't very well start fires at night?"

"But she rows like an Indian. Here come the girls. Now we will have a chance to talk it all over."

The arrival of Helen, Mary, Louise, and Julia completed the group, and presently a summer session of the True Treds was under way.

To the newcomers at Sea Crest the whole situation was explained, and nothing short of consternation followed its recital.

"Do you mean to say no one knows this girl?" asked Helen.

"No one we can find," replied Louise. "You see the whole town moves away when the summer folks come, all but the cleaners and the store keepers; and we didn't like to ask any of them."

"I'm sure Captain Dave must know this girl," declared Grace. "I'm going down to the station this very afternoon and have a talk with him."

"Saw him go out to Brightwater in a motor boat this morning," Louise said.

"Well, we simply have got to keep up our troop tactics until we run this down," declared Cleo. "Think of her saying we tried to drown the boy!"

"And she called him Bentley. That's rather a pretty name. He surely doesn't belong to her class," said Grace.

"But he too is odd, we must admit," resumed Louise, "and he had the very same kind of paper we found in the bottle."

"And his boat was covered with it," added Grace.

"But you really don't think he could be malicious enough to start fires?" asked Julia.

"I don't know," replied Grace. "They always say book-worms are queer, and surely he is a book-worm, if there ever was one."

"I propose taking a trip to that Looney Island," said Louise directly.

"I'd love to," followed Cleo; "but what about Captain Dave's warning?"

"What did he say?" inquired Mary.

"Why, he told us this Luna Island or Looney Land as the children call it, was a very good place to keep away from."

"Did he say why?" asked Helen.

"No; just hinted that children always feared to go over there, and he considers children the natural judges of danger. We know better.

Here we are mere kiddies, and we are not a bit afraid," and she laughed at the idea.

"In fact, we are just dying to go. How do you get there?" This from Margaret.

"Take the launch to the point, then hire a boat and row over to the island. We saw 'the girl' do it. It's only a short distance."

"Sounds alluring," said Mary, who was now a splendidly healthy little girl, quite unlike the timid creature discovered by the girls in our second volume, "The Girl Scouts at Bellaire."

"You are almost chubby, Mary," remarked Grace. "I suppose you had a wonderful winter in the South with your folks."

"Oh yes, wonderful," replied Mary. "But I would rather have been to school in New York with you girls. Perhaps next fall I can enter with you."

"So it is all decided," prompted Helen. "We are to go to your Looney Land and capture the lunes. I wonder if we had not better bring a few brothers along?"

"As scouts we scorn a body guard!" replied Louise, "although it might be well to leave a lookout over at the point."

"When do we set out?" asked Julia, now as keen as her companions on the perilous expedition.

"That must depend on the weather," said Cleo. "We can't brave the waters with over-

hung skies. If I'm not mistaken I hear thunder this minute."

"Bring your wheels in," cautioned Grace. "Benny will put them in the garage. There! That surely sounded near by."

In the cyclonic way storms have of gathering near the ocean, clouds tumbled over clouds, piling mountains high, then dipping down in veritable spouts ready to empty their weight of water on the shrinking earth. The weather had been just warm enough to precipitate this sort of shower, and before the first drops fell people scurried for shelter, deserting piers, and board walk, as if swept away by the reckless west wind.

The Girl Scouts stayed on the porch until the lightning frightened them inside Rosabell cottage, then from the windows watched the vagaries of the summer storm.

A sudden blinding flash of lightning and its immediate clap of thunder drove the girls from the window.

"Oh!" shouted more than one. "Wasn't that awful!"

"Listen!" as a gong sounded. "The fire bell!" cried Grace. "Get your coats; see the crowd over there! Let's run."

Without a thought of the down-pouring rain, the Girl Scouts, garbed in such protective garments as they could snatch from the clothes-tree in the hall of Rosabell, raced over to cover

the short distance to the pavilion, where the crowd was seen to gather from all directions.

"What was struck?" Cleo asked a boy, who was trying to outdistance the bright red fire engine.

"The pier, I guess," he replied, dashing on merrily at the prospect of some real excitement.

A light film of smoke could now be seen steaming up through the rain at the end of the pier. But it was not likely a fire could make much headway in that downpour. The girls watched the rather primitive fire apparatus, with keen interest. Crowds of boys, numbers of men, and a scattering of girls and children, made the scene quite a lively one, to say nothing of the shouting of the volunteer firemen—the only grade that is allowed to shout at a fire. A line of hose was soon dragged out to the end of the pier, and almost before the happy urchins realized it the fire was out, back taps sounded from the tower in the village, and the fun was over.

After the crowd had dispersed and the shower was entirely over, the girls walked down the pier to inspect the damage. On one of the benches near the end, an old man sat huddled alone, his fishing rod was at his feet, and his basket was beside him on the bench. As they approached he stood up, then sank down again unable to keep to his feet.

"He must have been out here when the lightning struck," said Louise. "The poor old man!"

They came up to him and he smiled feebly.

"That was a big shower," said Helen by way of introduction.

"Mighty heavy, mighty heavy," he answered, his words short and his voice very low.

"Were you out here then?" asked Grace, beginning to realize that the old man must have been stunned.

"Yes, and—it near—finished me," he replied, again trying to stand but ending by sinking back on the bench, heavier than before.

"Oh, you poor old man!" said Julia. "We must help you home. Where do you live?"

"Couldn't help me home," he replied with a sigh. "I have a long walk along the sand, and then the boat. Don't see how I'm going to make it though. That flash just did me up," and he stooped to gather his fishing things that had evidently been scattered when the hose was run down the pier.

"Where do you live?" again asked Louise. "No matter how far away it is we can help you. We can take you in a car."

"No cars go out that way," said the fisherman, mistaking Louise's meaning.

"Oh, we mean in an automobile," she corrected. "Let us see if you can't lean on some of us while the others go for a car. We will

be glad to help you," she insisted, feeling the Girl Scout pledge surge over her.

It was quickly decided Grace should run for her sister Leonore, to get their car out, as Rosabell was the nearest cottage, and while she hurried off with Helen, Cleo and Louise assisted the old man to his feet. Meanwhile Mary and Julia gathered up his fishing outfit.

He was old and feeble at best, but now, after his fright and shock from the lightning, he seemed leaden, as he leaned on Cleo from one side, with Louise at the other.

Up the pier they led him, and at every step he either sighed because he had lost his power or blessed "the little girls who gave him a hand." It seemed to the scouts rather odd that no one had discovered his plight until they had found him, but after all, it was not hard to understand how an old fisherman could be overlooked in the excitement.

Leonore had driven up with the car, and before the stragglers around the pier could question them, the girls had their charge in the comfortable seat, where he lay back in very apparent relief.

"Which way?" inquired the young girl driving.

"To the river dock," called Grace; and all crowded in the roomy car, they started off with their strange passenger.

CHAPTER X

PLANNING FOR ACTION

NOW, don't trouble another bit," protested the old man when Leonore pulled into the little boat landing. "I'll take the next boat across, and be all right, thank you for helping me. You're a fine set of girls."

From the time they had left Borden's pier the girls had been tactfully trying to find out where he lived, and why they couldn't drive him directly to his place. But to all their inquiries he answered evasively, and was most positive in declaring they could not fetch him home.

"But you are scarcely able to walk," protested Helen. "Why won't you let us drive around there with you? You know this car can easily cover that distance in a few minutes."

"I'm sorry to seem ungrateful," he replied, and the girls noticed his voice was almost sobbing. "But I can't let you do it."

"And you live on that Luna Island?" queried Grace gently.

"I do, worse luck," he answered. "But we

must take things as they come. There's Jennings's boat. He'll bring me across."

They reluctantly assisted the aged passenger to alight and watched him climb into the rain-soaked launch. He stumbled and almost fell into the seat under the dripping canopy. Captain Jennings propped the leather cushions under his sagging arms, and as the girls turned away from the landing they heard the motor of the *River Queen* chug out.

"No wonder they call that place over there Looney Land," remarked Julia. "It seems to me we are all meeting more of its loons every day."

"We have come across quite a few," admitted Cleo. "But this old man was nice; I liked him."

"Why didn't you ask him for a pass to the island then?" remarked Louise. "That still seems to be forbidden territory."

"Yes, something like 'No Man's Land'. But did any one ever hear of 'No Scout's Land?' That's the beauty of belonging to a privileged organization."

"Queer thing how every one warns us to keep away from there," said Julia. "Every one but Bentley. Wonder what he would say if we asked him for a pass!"

"That's a brilliant idea, Julie," declared Margaret. "The very thing to do is to ask Ben."

"I knew that boy's name ought to be something with Ben in it," remarked Grace. "I seemed to outline it in his face when he reminded me of my own wild, but adorable little brother Ben. Of course, we never see our own boys down here except at meals, or we might get them to help us."

"We don't even get ours at meals," said Helen. "Mother says we might better all be in a hotel or boarding house, for all the home life we get out of our cottage."

"Let's stop at our place and finish up our scout meeting," suggested Cleo. "The storm sort of broke up our session."

So Leonore accommodatingly let them down in front of the Log Cabin, and on the spacious rustic porch there the interrupted meeting was again convened.

"Grace, if you are going to act as secretary, I think you should keep records. When our summer is over we shall enjoy looking back at them."

"All right," agreed Grace, preparing pencil and pad for notes.

"We must remember," cautioned Margaret, "that we are pledged to protect ourselves as well as others. Now, how do we know it is safe to go to that island? Suppose there is some disease there?"

"We must find out more definitely about that, of course," spoke up Mary, who was now a

professed Tenderfoot. "It would be rash to run into some dreadful sickness."

"Also, we must question our motives and make sure we are not doing this out of rank curiosity," declared Louise sagely. "That would be silly, even if pardonable, and I don't think we could make a very creditable report to headquarters on such a pretense."

"Oh, that is clear enough," insisted Cleo. "It is just this way. We were confronted by this fire-bug thing, directly we struck the place, and its evidence has been piling up ever since. Every few nights a fire breaks out—and no one is able to discover the culprit."

"And that note we found was a challenge. It was written for who ever might pick it up, and we happened to be the 'whoever's'" said Louise. "So it plainly seems like our duty to run down the Weasle."

"But just why would you think the writer was on the island?" asked Helen, who, having come down late was not entirely familiar with all the details of the situation.

"We haven't any positive reason for that supposition," admitted Margaret; "but things point that way, and we must run down that clue first. Besides, it is very strange how every one warns us to keep away from Luna Land. It makes it fascinating, to say the least."

"Almost a good reason for going," remarked Mary. "And now girls, will you come over to

the hotel this evening, if you are free from other engagements? We are going to have a children's entertainment in the ball room, and I would love to have every one come."

"But our dresses?" asked Grace. "What should we wear?"

"It's a novelty thing, and you can wear whatever you please," answered Mary.

"How about all going as a troop? We would advertise the scouts, and it's lovely and cool now after that shower."

"Oh, that would be splendid!" enthused Mary. "Since all the war work has moved off the earth nothing seems to have really taken the uniform's place. And as you say, it will be wonderfully cool to-night."

"And another positive advantage to uniform is that one can't out-do the other in togs. I love that," declared Helen, "although we all have pretty party dresses."

So the True Treds scattered, keen with the anticipation of novelty night at the Colonade.

It is safe to guess that in the short time intervening there was much activity in each scout's home, in the matter of pressing uniforms, for even "going as a troop" would mean public inspection. Yet this amount of work was comparatively small compared with what might have been their task had dancing dresses been demanded.

Into the gold and white ball-room of the

Colonade the True Treds were ushered with quite an imposing ceremony a few hours later; and if Grace and Cleo wanted to giggle, the pomposity of the uniformed functionaries forbade any such frivolity.

Mary was there to welcome them, and with her was her fashionable aunt, Miss Constance Hastings, who was also distantly related to Cleo, through the marriage of Cleo's aunt to Mary's father's brother—remote but definite, just the same.

A perceptible stir was occasioned by the entrance of the girls; and since they were really quite a small troop, they walked in in pairs. Grace and Cleo led, then came Margaret and Louise, Julia and Helen, besides Isabel Gantor and Elizabeth Bissell, two True Treds who had come down that very afternoon, and altogether they made a fine showing for the scouts.

After the first flush of excitement the usual exchange of compliments occupied the girls. Cleo had grown so much taller, every one thought so, and her gray eyes and fair hair were really "a lot prettier." Grace had better be careful or she would get stout, why not roll on the beach every day? Elizabeth suggested this, while the tables were then turned on Elizabeth herself, who was declared to be far from thin.

"I am not getting fat," declared the jolly little Elizabeth. "I'm simply warped from be-

ing out in the rain. You should see my farm."

Then Helen was warned that such beautiful coloring as glowed in her cheeks, and such shadows as lurked under her dark eyes would some day put her in the class of distinguished foreigners, but when she protested that Irish are not so considered, and that those characteristics were hers because of that sort of connection, the girls passed her by as "satisfactory."

The opening strains of the orchestra prohibited further exchange of compliments or criticism, and the scouts paired off for a lively trot.

All the dance seemed suited to their uniforms, in fact, most steps were then executed with some precision, rather military in effect.

All about them buzzed the fairy-like children in such gorgeous styles, as seem specially concocted for big summer hotels; and resting between dances our girls had plenty of opportunity to observe the variety of plumage under which the little summer birds flew.

It was during intermission that the master of ceremonies approached Isabel; she happened to be the tallest of the scouts, and he asked her if they would favor the company with some troop manœuvres, but on consulting the other girls they declined to do so.

"You see," Mary explained, as she was best acquainted with the hotel staff, "we could not

do anything in public as a troop without permission. And while this is almost a private gathering, we feel it best to adhere to the rules."

"Still it was flattering to be asked," commented Cleo.

"Let's go out on the porch," suggested Mary. "We will have a beautiful view of the ocean to-night."

But it so happened that something else than the scenic effect entertained them, on the spacious side porch of the Colonnade that evening.

CHAPTER XI

AT THE COLONADE

THEY felt quite like grown-ups out there in the moonlight, on the carpeted piazzas, with the music from the ballroom wafting out through the many open windows.

Here and there in sheltered nooks, knots of young folks buzzed their confidences, while the scouts chose two long, low divans, directly off the exchange, where they might at once enjoy the music of the waves and the rhythm of the orchestra.

It all seemed too pleasant to mar with ordinary conversation, so holding hands as girls will, the companions sank down to enjoy the wonderful summer night.

They were not more than settled when two young men sauntered out of the smoking room and took the seat just back of their divan. The girls nudged each other, and squeezed hands, but did not emit the usual warning cough.

"Well, I am glad to hear from Dick," spoke one of the men; "I tell you, he did great work in our little old war."

"You-bet-y'u," replied the second voice, slurring his words together as young men do, and giving them that jolly twang peculiar to the college boy.

"Yes, sir, Dick Gordon is some boy, and I'll be mighty glad to see him."

Grace almost pinched Cleo's arm to the yelling point. "That's my Jackie—the one who owns my marine room," she said in a low voice.

"Keep your window locked," cautioned Cleo.

"And he's still on the blue?" went on the masculine voice.

"Still is—you-bet-cha," replied his companion. "Regular Willie off the yacht, only he's bound to be Richard on the yacht. Seems some millionaire family he knew—there may be a girl in it—prevailed on him to take a yacht out this summer, so he's sailing her—the yacht I mean; I'm only guessing at the girl."

Isabel coughed audibly. It was just like her to do so and she either had to cough or laugh, and she hastily decided on expressing herself in the least conspicuous outburst.

For a few minutes the young men ceased speaking, and in the interval the girls undertook to carry on something like a conversation; at least they were endeavoring to make their presence known to the other occupants of that corner of the porch.

Thus establishing a general hum of voices, remarks from the young men only floated in as

the girls might pause, or giggle, or hesitate about staying longer from the dance floor.

"So old Dick will be back before summer sundown?" they heard.

"Sure thing, you bet'cha," replied the second voice, "and we'll all be here to give the cheers."

"But the Gordon place is rented. Wonder what Dick will do without all his junk?"

"That's so. Well, we can bring him here. All the gang will be back by that time."

"Heard when and where he comes in?"

"Depends upon the yachters, of course. But Dick said something about a lady's good health or bad health, I forgot which."

A bevy of young ladies now discovered the youths who had been thus enjoying a smoke and talk, and the boys were promptly carried off to the ball room, where the strains of an alluring waltz were floating.

"Now Gracie, see what's going to happen?" exclaimed Louise, as soon as talking thus was safe. "Your adorable Dick of the marine room is coming back on a yacht, and he's going to miss his junk."

"And maybe he'll give us a sail on the millionaire's yacht!" suggested Grace.

"See that it includes every True Tred. There, I believe the grown-ups are breaking in on our evening," complained Mary. "Let's make a march out of that waltz."

"Don't you have wonderful times here, Mary?" asked Grace, entering the brilliant room again.

"Yes, but I can't say that I like it better than a simple home life," replied Mary. "We travel so much, and it's hotel all the time——"

"But you are going to spend next week with me," interrupted Cleo. "I hardly realize it yet that you are my really truly coz," and she gave the girl's long, brown braids a familiar twerk.

"Whatever did you do with old Reda?" asked Grace, referring to the picturesque nurse who played so important a part in our second volume, "The Girl Scouts of Bellaire."

"Daddy made her comfortable for life," replied Mary. "He considered she had done everything that she know how to do for me, and mother's folks decided she would be happier among her own people. But Aunt Constance asked me to bring you up to her sitting room to-night, and as soon as you have had enough of this, suppose we go up?"

It was well the sitting room was spacious, for the scouts numbered quite a company. However the wealthy Miss Hastings greeted them warmly, and seemed greatly interested in their organization.

"I can never forget how you discovered our little Mary for us," she said, placing her hand lovingly on Mary's shoulder, "and if ever I

can do anything to help you, please let me know. It is splendid to have girls united under such principles. Mary has charmed me with her interpretations of your little manual."

They thanked Miss Hastings for her interest, and smiled over the compliments. The girls were quite bewildered with the luxurious surroundings. Everything seemed so velvety, and so much cushioned, and all this was enhanced by the soft glitter of the shaded lights, and the rose-tinted glow of the color scheme. Here, at least, scout uniform seemed out of place.

Miss Hastings was what we might discreetly call a mellow blonde, not implying or imputing anything artificial to her blondness. She had the very softest blue eyes, and wore the daintiest orchid tint gown; but in spite of her apparent luxury, she instantly inspired the girls with a feeling of ease and confidence.

Mary fluttered about, displaying such trophies of her southern tour as might safely be carried to her hotel abode; and when the sight-seeing was done, Cleo exacted a promise from Miss Hastings, that Mary might spend a complete week with her.

This was the signal for a perfect flood of similar invitations, and when the girls left the suite, their evening dance cards were well marked with dates to visit and dates to entertain Mary Dunbar, Cleo's popular cousin.

"What worries me is that Dick boy coming

over in the yacht," remarked Isabel jokingly. "Seems to me Grace is in for a wonderful time."

"But he may be on shore leave," added Julia, "then he wouldn't be any more attractive than our 'you-bet-chu' chap," she said, indicating the young man who inserted that boyish expression so often in his conversation.

The children were leaving the ballroom when the scouts took their final drink of pink lemonade, as Grace insisted on calling the fruit punch, and as they came out to the porch for their "good-nights," mothers and nurses were gathering the fluttering little ones to their arms.

They were about to leave when a shrill voice from the hall startled every one, "Oh, come quick, a doctor! My baby is choking!"

A mother uttered the cry. In an instant every one was in confusion looking for a doctor, but it so happened in all that big hotel at the moment no physician could be found.

"What shall I do!" wailed the mother, now wringing her hands and begging for help. "I don't know how—to save—my darling!"

Quick as a flash Julia broke away through the crowd and, followed by Louise and Helen, she made her way to the room of the distracted parent and the suffering child.

On the bed lay the little child, gasping, choking, his face almost purple. No one had attempted to do anything but look on in horror,

as people usually do under such exciting conditions.

Julia, however, summoned all her courage and her scout training, and grabbing the little one before she had a chance to suffer from hesitation, she held his little heels high as she could stretch them, and shook him vigorously, while the distracted mother looked on in consternation. When the Girl Scout's strength failed, and she allowed the child to sink down on the bed again, the safety pin, he had almost swallowed, lay beside him on the coverlet.

It was all over in so few minutes that Louise and Helen merely looked on to encourage Julia.

"Oh, my darling, my darling!" wailed the excited mother. "Are you alive? Does he breathe?"

"He will be all right directly," said Helen, surprising herself with her own calmness. "Just give him plenty of air."

By now those who had assembled in idle curiosity had dispersed, leaving room for the other scouts to come within sight of the open door.

Quickly as the chubby youngster recovered his breath he made a grab at the neck tie that floated from Julia's blouse. Then he wanted to play with the buttons on her skirt, and he evinced such other evidence of good fellowship that every one stood by in silent admiration.

The mother, however, had recovered her com-

posure sufficiently to thank Julia; and this she did most profusely.

"What would I have done?" she asked. "I simply went to pieces, in a perfect panic, when I saw that boy choke. Oh, here is Neal," turning to greet a young man who just entered the room. "Neal, do come and meet these wonderful little girls. They saved the baby brother. In another moment, I am sure, he would have strangled."

And before them stood one of the young men who had entertained them unawares on the West porch, an hour earlier. He added his thanks to those of his mother, while the baby brother kicked delightedly on the badly tossed bed.

"And you knew more about it than mother," he remarked, a note of incredulity in his voice. "But I see you are scouts. They teach you emergency stunts in your organization, I suppose."

"Yes," replied Julia covered with confusion and anxious to escape; and escape she did directly the good-looking Neal stepped aside, and bowed the girls graciously into the corridor.

"I almost choked myself," admitted Louise.

"I will do so yet," declared Helen.

CHAPTER XII

ON THE SANDS

AS a quiet evening it was a cyclone," said Julia to her congratulating companions. "I really was not sure whether I should shake both the heels at once, or in rapid succession, but when I saw that safety pin—oh, girls!" and she pretended to slink down into the supporting arms offered her.

"Whether premeditated or a mere accident you did nobly," declared Margaret, "and I shouldn't wonder if handsome young Neal wouldn't want to join our troop. Isn't he stunning looking?"

"But he is the friend of marine Richard—he who is coming in on the millionaire's yacht," put in Grace. "Therefore Julia, you and I shall divide the honors. Joking aside girls, what is our program for the morrow?"

"Bathing, of course—high tide at ten-thirty," announced Julia.

"After that we will pay a call at Captain Dave's Life Saving Station," said Cleo. "In fact we can run over there from the beach. We

have simply got to find out all he knows about Luna Island."

They were on their way home from the Colonade, and as it was still early, the streets were populated with summer visitors just leaving the pavilions, the boardwalks, picture theaters, or hotels. Each scout leaving the group left one less to the usual "last tag" game, which again became of interest to the young girls, not yet too dignified to enjoy such pleasure romps.

Next morning at the beach a number of new arrivals were added to the list of their companions, as each day now brought its own quota of visitors to the popular summer resort, and it was surely "the more the merrier."

"Good swimming in the cove," announced Cleo, "at least we call it the cove, but it's really a little lake, made smooth by the banked up sand bar. Come on everybody, up to Third Avenue."

Surf boards added to the sport, and while every morning was a holiday at the beach, to-day seemed something of legal type; such a wonderfully merry time the colonists were enjoying. All the scouts were swimmers; Grace as usual was daring to the point of risk, Cleo quickly followed every prank she initiated, and the others found plenty of fun either attempting to follow, or originating their own brand of frolic.

What is more alluring than the ocean on the right sort of summer day? Beyond the bar steamers could just be seen emitting their long, smoky ribbons over the water, that from the distance seemed so close to the sky as to be merely a first floor with that blue mottled ceiling. A few daring swimmers would work their way out in canoes, taking the rollers at constant risk of submersion, then come sailing in like a shot, never making a break in the dash until past the bathers, and out on the very beach each little bark would triumphantly land. This was great sport, but few girls were brave enough to indulge in it.

The life savers, two stalwart youths, so bronzed as to glisten in the sun like copper models—sat on the high bench under the big beach sunshade. They could see above the heads of the crowds, far out past the danger line, and theirs was the responsibility of keeping track of every foolish boy, or more foolish girl, who ventured beyond the ropes.

At last the scouts did get together, and made a run through the wet sand, along the edge toward the fishing pier, and from there it was only a matter of crossing the street to reach the life saving station.

In a trot, popular as exercise after bathing, all four girls, Louise, Grace, Cleo and Julia started off. The far end of the bathing beach was now deserted, the hour approaching lunch

or dinner always exacting the dressing process, hotel guests especially, being obliged to report in the dining-room on time.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," begged Cleo. "I thought I saw a piece of pink coral."

"Pink coral doesn't grow around here," protested Grace. "You likely saw a blushing fish bone. Don't bother with it. You know how we made out with the pink crabs."

"Yes," put in Julia. "Let's change our color scheme. Here's a lovely amethyst shell."

The trot was started up again, heads erect, shoulders back, and elbows in—regular marathon for the beach on this perfect summer's day.

"Look here!" called Cleo. "Here's another message about—fire-bugs. See it spells: 'L-O-O-K O-U-T'" she figured it out in the sand. "There, would you ever think one would be so daring?"

They all paused to read the letters so crudely worked in the wet sand.

"Yes," insisted Julia. "There's 'bug.' Guess they didn't dare write the word 'fire'."

A lone figure on a lone bench up near the boardwalk attracted their attention at the same moment.

"If there isn't our boy!" exclaimed Louise. "Now, doesn't that almost prove him guilty?"

"No, it doesn't," objected his champion, Grace. "He's too far away—besides——"

"Any one could make letters in the sand," put in Julia. "Think of the hundreds of children who played here all morning. Come on," and she started the race again.

But they had scarcely gone a hundred yards when she stopped very suddenly.

"Oh, mercy!" she screamed. "I stepped on——"

"You bet you did! You stepped on me!"

The answer came from a grotesque figure that had just pulled itself out of the sand, and it was none other than the girl, still known only as "Letty."

"I didn't mean to," apologized Julia, for, as a matter of fact, she had come full weight on the sand hill under which was buried the girl.

"Well, you didn't break any bones," said the girl, with less antagonism than she had formerly displayed. "But I thought the sky fell—guess I was dreaming."

She dragged herself up and shook the sand from her unkempt skirt, although the action seemed unnecessary, then grinned at the girls in the most comic way.

This was a signal for Grace to howl, and howl she did, to be followed by the others, every one seeming glad that Letty had not "thrown her head at them," as was her usual attitude in meeting the scouts.

"And you go swimmin' in there?" she asked, pointing a mocking finger at the ocean.

"Surely, don't you?" asked Louise.

"Me? Well, I guess not. No more ocean for Kitty," and she turned her back to the waves, meanwhile pulling a long, wry face.

"Are you Kitty?" asked Cleo.

"Yep, that's me. They call me Kitty Scuttle, but Scuttle ain't my name. Boys give me that 'cause I shoo them off the island."

Here was an opening. Louise seized it.

"Sit down and tell us about it, Kitty," she said. "You know we really had no idea of bothering your dove the other day. Did his leg fix up all right?"

"Guess so, but he ain't my bird," and she did actually flop down in the sand, much to their surprise.

"Why don't you like the ocean?" asked Grace.

"The ocean is a coward. It fights women and babies," she said, a queer mocking irony marking her words.

"Yes," agreed Louise, to placate her, "the ocean is treacherous."

"An' cruel," she sort of hissed. "I came from that ocean on a rope once, and I'll never go back on it while I'm alive."

"Oh, you were shipwrecked," ventured Cleo, her mind running to the story of the little girl on the frozen mother's breast, told them by Captain Dave.

"Yes, Mom never spoke to me again, and I hate that ocean ever since."

The girls exchanged glances. Surely she must be the one spoken of by Captain Dave.

"But you like still-water?" suggested Grace, in order to relieve the tension.

"Love the little Round River, Glimmer Lake, and even the bay," replied Kitty, "but not that monster."

It seemed to the scouts she used a queer mixture of phrases. Cleo thought she might be addicted to reading sensational books.

"Do you go to school?" queried Julia.

"Sure, every one has to go to school, and I don't stay on the island in winter." This last was said in a tone implying every one ought to know that.

"You come over here in winter?" It was Louise who dared press that question. They all felt Kitty was due to take another tantrum any minute. She had been almost dangerously good, so far.

"Yep," the finality of this spoke for itself.

"We're just going over to the life saving station to see Captain Dave," said Cleo. "Glad we didn't hurt you as we ran."

"Couldn't," said Kitty. "I don't hurt. Nothin' touches me. And say, I wasn't mad when I pegged the box at you the other day. I was just funnin'."

"You didn't hurt me either," returned

Louise, quite as good-naturedly. "A little paste-board box couldn't hurt a scout."

"Do you belong to the government?" asked Kitty suddenly.

"We're not enlisted, if that's what you mean," answered Cleo, "but we learn to give service if it is needed."

"I'd like a suit like yours. Must be fine for fogs. Sometimes I can't get into my rags they're so soggy over there in the woods."

Every one silently agreed such clothes as she possessed would surely become "soggy" under the trees.

"But only a scout can wear the uniform," said Grace, being careful to use a very kindly tone.

"What do you have to do?" inquired Kitty, evincing interest.

"When we meet you again we'll tell you about it," replied Louise. "But, say Kitty, we want to take a trip over to the island some day. Shall we see you over there?"

"To the island!" she shouted, and all her gentleness was gone instantly. "Don't you dare; the dogs would eat you up!"

"Oh, no, we don't mind dogs," Cleo hurried to say. "Besides, you must know them and you could keep them in check."

"Oh, no, I couldn't," she was plainly excited now. "Don't you dare come over to Looney Land. The reason I liked you was on account of

you fetching Uncle Pete up from the pier. He told me, and I was—thankful.”

She hung her head and her cropped hair stood out like a brush around her face. Kitty was a pathetic sight, even when excited.

“Was he your uncle? Is he all right?” asked Louise.

“Nope. He isn’t all right. Can’t hardly stir ever since. He said he would have died if you girls hadn’t helped him, and I want to thank you for that. I’d just die without Uncle Pete.”

“Well, good-by,” said Julia, as they started off this time positively. “Tell Uncle Pete we will come over to see him soon.”

At this the child ran over to Louise and literally grabbed her, seizing her two hands, and holding them as tightly as her own could grasp them.

“Oh, please, please don’t come!” she begged, and her eyes had the look of a frightened animal. “You don’t know what it would mean to me. And I ask you not to. Won’t you promise?”

The girls looked at the changed creature in undisguised astonishment.

“We don’t want to bring trouble on you, Kitty, if that is what you mean,” said Julia. “But we have promised ourselves a trip to that queer island. Of course, if it would hurt you for us to go——”

“Oh, it would, that’s it. It would hurt me

more than you could guess. So tell me you won't come over!"

"All right, we'll see," said Cleo, and they hurried off to the bathing house to dress, as the time for visiting Captain Dave had been consumed in talking to Kitty.

"Well, what do you think of that?" almost gasped Cleo when they joined the other girls who had been impatiently waiting for the report from the life saving station.

"Whatever is wrong about Luna Land?" added Louise. "Now see where we are at."

"Can't we go?" pouted Grace.

"I don't see why not," put in Julia. "Surely, we couldn't make any trouble, just by going over there. I think that girl is—woozy."

"Well, I think she's pretty sharp," said Cleo, "and until we can find out from some one what is wrong over there, I'll vote to defer the trip. Suppose we really should bring trouble on that poor cropped head!"

"That's so," agreed Grace, though it was plain the change in plans brought disappointment to the entire group. "Let's hurry. We must have talked half an hour. And I promised not to be one minute late for lunch."

"We have such a time with meals—never can get folks together," said Cleo, hastily jumping in to her blouse and skirt.

"All the same," insisted Margaret, "we must go to the life saving station right after lunch."

“And how about our tennis game? We promised Mary, you know, to go over for a couple of sets this afternoon.”

“We never seem to get to tennis,” deplored Louise. “But let’s all meet at Borden’s at two o’clock, and then we can decide what to do.”

“There’s Leonore looking for me,” called out Grace.

“And there’s Jerry looking for me,” added Cleo.

“Come on girls, pile in, plenty of room,” called Gerald; and those who did not run to his car flocked to the one driven by Leonore, so that the belated scouts made good time, then at least, in getting to their respective cottages.

CHAPTER XIII

A BLANKET OF FOG

THE genuine good times of summer, such as seem to sprout up daily and scatter enough seeds to insure an equal good time on the morrow, had given the scouts such a round of gayety, that a full week dashed by before they could again settle down to work on the mystery of Luna Land.

Girls coming down to the beach from the city, others leaving for the mountains, a round of cottage entertaining, besides events at the casino, swimming contests, hotel entertainments—all these and many other features, served to keep the girls delightfully busy at the gay little summer resort, Sea Crest.

But in spite of such attraction a rainy spell will set in, and set in it did, good and plenty, along about the middle of July. Then it was that the resources of cottage and hotel were taxed to keep the visitors contented.

Mary, at the Colonnade, had been a veritable benefactress, for there something was always going on; but Miss Constance Hastings found

she could not stand the damp chill of continued rain and heavy fog, so quite unexpectedly she "pulled up stakes," and as Mary would not think of letting her go on to Tuxedo alone, there was suddenly one True Tred less at Sea Crest.

"What would we do without the life saving station and Captain Dave?" Grace asked, trudging along through the dense fog, toward those quarters. "Come along Weasie, I wouldn't wonder but Helen and Julia will come in from the other way. Do you suppose the sun will ever shine again?"

"Bound to," replied Louise, "but this awful fog!"

"My conscience is mildewed and my temper is blue molded," declared Grace. "Just look at what used to be the ocean."

"Come on over to the pier," suggested Louise. "I love to watch the breakers tear up against the piles."

The boardwalk was all but deserted, not more than the heroic health seekers who walk in all kinds of weather, having courage enough to promenade.

Under the shelter of the pavilion the girls stopped to see if any one they knew might be about, when a figure under an umbrella, far over in a corner protected from the blanket of fog, caught their attention.

"The boy!" said Grace. "Let's go over and speak to him."

"He might get stage fright and again jump overboard," laughingly returned Louise.

"Any port in a storm," quoted Grace. "If I don't talk to some one I'll just have to ring myself up on the telephone. I'm dark blue."

"Nice compliment to your chum," remarked Louise, smiling good-naturedly.

"You know I didn't mean it that way, Weasie. But honestly, why is everything so horrid?"

"Guess because we are used to so much excitement we don't know how to slow down. At least that's what mother is always preaching."

"See, he looks! He sees!" gasped Grace, her voice not so blue or drab in tone as might have been expected.

The boy had lowered his umbrella, and touched his cap to the girls. He even smiled.

"Is it possible? At last!" Grace continued to elocute. "Now just watch me bring him to my feet."

She seized the arm of Louise and led her to the corner where the boy, as ever, was trying to devour his book. At their approach he quickly closed the covers, jammed papers in his pockets, and then waited to speak to the girls who had dragged him out of Round River a month before.

"Hello," he greeted them, and both were glad he was boyish enough to be frank, and not stiff.

"Wonderful day," Grace chirped in with banality.

"If you don't care what you say," he replied brightly.

"But we do, so we'll tell the truth. It's an awful day," declared Louise.

"Don't try to sit here," the boy said. He had risen, of course. "The benches are wet enough to float me as the river did. Come over to the other end. The wind doesn't drive the fog in there."

Louise and Grace followed him, glad of the prospect of a little chat to break the storm's monotony.

"I've been wanting to thank you," began the boy. "My name is Bentley Arnold."

"And this Louise Hart and I am Grace Philow," cut in Grace politely.

The boy did not bow or scrape foolishly, but accepted the introduction as any boy should.

In the West corner of the pavilion they found seats, and quickly exhausting the weather topic, drifted to more interesting subjects.

"Did I hear that you live on the island?" asked Grace directly.

"Not exactly," replied Bentley, "but I am staying there just at present."

Not another word! That lead was lost!

"You are awfully fond of reading, aren't you?" Louise asked next.

"Oh, yes, very. Aren't you?"

And the book question was thus threatened to go the way of Grace's query.

"Yes, indeed," Louise hurried. "What sort of books do you like best?"

"Boys' books, and I suppose you like girls' books best," he replied.

Grace and Louise exchanged glances. Each was, no doubt, thinking they might next ask what shade of paper he liked to write on best. The reply would likely be quite as non-committal.

"How can we get over to the island?" Grace dared then. "We are just dying to explore that little Luna Land. It seems so romantic."

"I wouldn't advise you to visit there just now," he replied. "Nothing to see but woods, and rocks."

"Yet every one who goes over there seems so —so selfish about the woods and rocks, they keep telling us to stay away." Louise said this pleasantly enough, but she did *say* it, nevertheless.

"Oh, it isn't that," he replied, his tone completely wiping out the possibility of any one being selfish about the island.

"What is it then?" asked Grace bravely.

"Well," he faltered, "you see some of the people over there just think they own the place, and they're queer about strangers."

"Does Kitty feel that way?" pressed Louise.

"Kitty?" he repeated. "Do you know her?"

"Yes, a little. But she never would tell us a thing about Luna Land, except to keep away from it." Grace contributed this effort.

"She's queer but not really dishonest," he said valiantly. "I'm getting to understand her better."

"So are we," and Louise could not suppress a real laugh at the memory of Kitty's various stages of friendship, or at least of her acquaintance.

Louise tried another tack. "Do you get books from the library?"

"Oh, no, I don't have time for library books," replied Bentley. "Wish I had."

"I suppose you know a lot of boys here—are you a scout? We are Girl Scouts you know," volunteered Grace.

"No, to all three questions," he answered. But as usual he did not amplify his brief statement.

"There are Julia and Helen," announced Louise gayly. But the advance of the two other girls seemed a signal for Bentley to leave, and this he did, sliding into the ice-cream parlor before Julia and Helen reached their chums.

"Oh, you missed it," called Louise.

"We have met him," followed Grace.

"Did he invite you over?" asked Julia.

"Can he really talk?" inquired Helen.

"Just the same he is a nice boy," Grace declared.

"We always knew that," Julia told her.

"But, no joking, what did he say?" Helen asked seriously.

"Let me see! What did he say?" Grace was now asking Louise.

"Oh, don't tease. You know what we want to know," pleaded Julia.

"We don't know what *you* want to know, neither do we know what *we* want to know, for we couldn't find out," replied Louise promptly.

"Do you mean to say he didn't tell you a thing?" and Helen showed disappointment.

"We wouldn't go so far as that, but he did not tell us anything interesting, if that is what you mean," said Grace. "But do come and sit down, we don't dare follow him inside the store."

"He's gone. I saw him steering his umbrella due north a moment ago," said Louise. "But, girls, really he is the nicest chap."

Then followed a complete review, almost word for word of the conversation held with Bentley Arnold. Yet even this brought the quartette no evident satisfaction.

"If this fog lets up I'm going over there, if I have to pay twenty-five dollars for a sail in the South Park Air Ship. I know it came down with a bad bump the other day, but I'd risk it for a sail to Luna Land," declared Grace.

"Let's go over to Captain Dave's now," said Helen. "He is the most entertaining gentleman I know for this sort of weather."

"We found Bentley all right," qualified

Louise. "And think of the name: Bentley Arnold!"

"Did he say anything about his income tax?" asked Helen, but for an answer the jaunt up the fog-laden boardwalk was undertaken, and only those who have ever indulged in real mid-summer fogs, could really appreciate description, and such do not need it—they know!

Captain Dave was glad to see the girls. He lighted the big oil lamp and even offered to burn papers in the stove to "kill the chill," but the girls insisted they would be perfectly comfortable without the heat.

"And Captain Dave, do you know about Kitty?" Grace plunged quickly as politeness would permit.

"Know Kitty? Well, I should, seein' as how I unclasped her from her dead mother's arms," replied the seaman, almost reverently.

"Then, Captain," this very gently from Louise, "why don't you do something for the child? She runs wild as an Indian."

"Do something for her," and he dumped out a pipe full of good tobacco. "Why, what could I do?"

"Does any one take care of her? Has she any friends?" inquired Helen kindly.

"Too many. That's just the trouble," and he filled his pipe with new tobacco. "You know that nobody's business is everybody's business,

and that's what's the matter with poor little Kitty."

The girls did not quite understand the description, but the captain seemed troubled, so they hesitated about pressing more pointed questions.

"She is not half as wild as she seems," said Julia after a time. "We had quite a jolly little chat with her one day."

"You did now? That's fine!" he answered heartily. "I wish you could see her once in a while. She needs the right sort of friends. What's a girl to do when every other girl in the village shuns her?"

"We would all be very glad to talk to her and make real friends with her," insisted Helen.

"I'm sure you would, for you're girls brought up to be kind and friendly," said Captain Dave. "I've heard how you befriended old Peter."

"Oh, that wasn't anything," Julia interrupted. "We only took him in from the storm."

"Queer thing none of our firemen happened to see him! And old Pete out there fishin'! Why, he was so stunned, Kitty told me next day he couldn't move," said Captain Dave.

"We thought we would have lots wilder experiences down here than just driving nice old men home, Captain," complained Grace.

"Aren't you ever going to let us try your breeches buoy?"

"Try it? What would you do with a breeches buoy?" he asked.

"Have a lovely ride in it, wouldn't we?" said Grace.

"I hope not," replied the captain seriously. "That's not a thing to play with."

"And Kitty is the little girl you told us about? She whom you took from the wreck of the Alameda?" asked Louise.

"Yes, she is Kitty Schulkill, but they've nicknamed her Kitty Scuttle, 'count of the way she scuttles about so. But I thought when she was taken over to the Point she might quiet down some, but Kitty is Kitty just the same," he concluded rather gloomily.

"Has she any relatives?" inquired Julia.

"Claims to be, one woman there, a high falootin dame, claims to be her guardeen," he said, using the quaint old way of pronouncing the last word. "But I'm not sure. Don't know as I just like her any too—well." And again the pipe suffered from suppressed emotion.

They were making some progress—all the girls felt keenly interested, and even a little bit excited.

"Does this woman live with her at the Point?" ventured Grace.

"Oh, to be sure—she runs the Point, from all I hear," he replied. "But as I told you first

thing, that Point is al'lus a pesky place and a good place to veer from."

Confronted again with this thread-bare opposition to a visit at the Point, the girls looked discouraged.

"But you would like us to be friendly with Kitty. How can we become acquainted with her if we are not to—go—to her home?" Grace blurted out finally.

The Captian shook his head. "I'll tell you," he began. "This fancy dressed woman, from what I hear from Kitty, is a queer case, and for a short time it seems best to humor her. Let her try it, I says when Kitty told me—but I wouldn't say positive I like the scheme."

"Is that why you don't want us to go over to the island?" asked Louise. Her voice was gentle and she looked at the old sea captain with an apology in her eyes.

"Now, see here, little girls," he answered; "you have almost thrown old Dave off his course. I don't know enough about the Point to speak of it. I'm tied here, like the 'Boy on the Burnin' Deck,' and when I do leave quarters it is al'lus on government business. So don't take too seriously what I say, except this—keep off Luna Land, and don't pester little Kitty."

And with that admonition they felt obliged to feign content.

CHAPTER XIV

ABOARD THE BLOWELL

NOW we know what the fog was for," exclaimed Cleo. "To show us how a good clear day can look, that's why a fog is a fog," she stated emphatically.

The day was perfect, and perhaps more conspicuously so by contrast with the long spell of damp just lifted. Activities that had been suppressed were now springing into life, like emotional mushrooms, and the True Treds were markedly busy, trying to fit all the good times into an over-crowded program.

Cleo and Grace were making a week's schedule. This had been altered so often, Grace proposed following Margaret's plan of "fun-by-the-day."

"No matter how carefully we arrange it," she protested to Cleo on the porch of the Log Cabin, "some of the girls insist on crowding in other things. Now, to-day we were to go canoeing, and here comes Julia, telephoning to every one of us to go sailing in a sail boat."

"I think that's lovely of Julia," said Cleo.

“because Grazia dear, we can go canoeing any day, but only sailing when some one asks us. Who did?”

“Julia’s cousins from Breakentake sailed down the bay early this morning—it must have been a very early start. They are going to stay over, and Julia says if the wind is right, we may all go out for the afternoon. Of course, it’s a lovely prospect, but what’s the use of making plans? Why not just grab them?”

Grace had ridden over on her bicycle, and the exercise furnished her a wonderful beautifier—had she real need of the process. Eyes shining, cheeks glowing, with almost dewy softness of color, even Cleo, ordinarily indifferent to temperamental changes, commented on her chum’s appearance.

“I do believe, Grace,” she remarked, “the dampness is good for the complexion. You’re as downy as a peach.”

“Dampness is a beautifier. Leonore says so. That’s what makes Newport so popular. Ever see the hydrangeas grow there? But Cleo dear, you haven’t been forgotten in the fog. You are rather peachy yourself.”

“Nay, nay, false friend. Tempt me not—I shall not desert the ranks for movies,” and Cleo struck one of her popular attitudes. “But about the sailing ship-ahoy! I’m ready. What time do we embark?”

“Julia will call us all up after lunch when she

gets a line on the wind. I believe it has to be in 'on high' to get us up the bay. All right," and Grace mounted her wheel. "We will all be ready, and hereafter little Captain, count me out on the program cards. They do better when left to the inspirational, as our own Captain Clark would say."

To be able to learn, to be elastic to the point of flexibility, is surely the secret of all progress, and these girls of True Tred had little need of such a lesson.

The Blowell stood straining at its cable at Round River dock when the scouts, numbering a troop, scampered aboard. Julia's cousins, Mae and Eugenia Westbrook, prided themselves on their nautical skill, and nothing could possibly be more promising for a day's sport than a sail on the Blowell.

"Scouts! Scouts! Rah, rah, rah!"

"True-Treds! True-Treds—Sis-boom ma!"

They shouted the call till every last one had climbed into the "pit" of the graceful sailing vessel, and like a sturdy strong crew they appeared; the scouts in their realiable khaki, and the captain and mate in their shining white duck, with the regulation yachting cap, jauntily but securely set on their capable heads.

From the tips of the mast "Old Glory" floated to the stiff breeze, the ceremony of raising the colors having been complied with according to Girl Scout formality. Cleo, as acting captain,

pulled the slender rope, while the girls stood at attention and in salute.

"You may float the boat flag now," said Captain Mae. "Be sure you adjust it right side up."

Grace leaned over the stern to affix the little marine emblem in its place, and soon the sail swung out on its halyard, and when the mate, Eugenia, cut loose from shore, the Blowell lost no time in demonstrating the power of its name.

"Oh, how delightful," gasped Margaret. "And we thought canoeing was fun."

"It's just glorious," exhaled Julia. "Now, aren't you glad I changed our plans?"

"Tickled to pieces," declared Cleo. "I think this is the only worthwhile sort of airship because it combines the beauty of air and water."

They were seated in the trunk cabin watching with deep interest Captain Mae as she set the sail, letting it out gradually as it took the wind, but being careful not to throw too much canvass in the face of the stiff breeze that seemed to sweep from the deep azure sky, as if glad of its own release after the long spell of hateful weather.

Mae was at the tiller guiding the steering gear to fix the vessel in its course, on the smooth, blue waters.

For some time the handling of the craft occupied the visitors' entire attention, but presently they undertook to move around.

"This is where the Blowell beats your Indian Queen canoe, Louise," said Cleo. "You can move here without upsetting."

"But we *could* really upset in this boat," Louise reminded them. "Although, I am not fearing any such catastrophe."

"Isn't it invigorating," Margaret added to the continuous praise song. "I like the life of this motion, yet it hasn't the least spilly effect."

Thus they enthused until shore points of interest broke in on the marine eulogy.

"Just see us leave Weasle Point behind," remarked Cleo, with a rather prolonged look at the green speck as it drifted away.

"Wonder if Kitty is over there?" said Grace.

"And Bentley," added Julia, not to deprive her chums of their usual joke that she never forgot Bentley.

"And my Uncle Pete," insisted Grace. "Do you know, girls, Captain Dave says he was seriously stunned by that storm?"

"Poor old man! And to think we can't even bring him a thermos of chicken broth," deplored Louise.

The sail boat was gliding over the water, proudly as the clouds themselves drifted overhead. The Westbrook girls were allowing their visitors full scope of the graceful craft, but objected definitely to Grace taking a ride in the little dory that raced behind. Grace thought

such a feat would be a genuine lark, but Captain Mae reminded her that the Sandy Hook Bay was not the placid little Glimmer Lake she had been accustomed to sporting upon.

Down in the cabin a real tea was served at four o'clock, and if automobiling is conducive to real appetites, sailing leads to the port of hunger-pangs; and as an alleviative Orange Pekoe, cheese, cookies, lettuce sandwiches, with peanut butter and other conserves, can be heartily recommended, according to the Log of the Blowell, as inscribed that day by the True Treds.

"All hands on the deck," ordered Cleo, in mock severity, when cracker tins and tea cups were being worked to the point of refined cruelty.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied Grace, being first to reach deck.

"Shall we sing 'Starboard watch ahoy!' or 'Little Jack'?" Margaret asked.

"No, let's sing 'Sailing!'" suggested Julia.

"Who knows any of the words?" inquired Louise. "The title sounds appropriate, but it would take more words to fill out a tune?"

"Starboard watch ahoy! Starboard watch ahoy! And who can feel-e-e-eel, while on the blue the vessel ke-e-ell." This was Cleo's contribution done in all sharps, and as Louise warned them, the title wouldn't do for a girl-sized song.

"No, that's too old," objected Helen. "It's out of print. Try 'Sailing.'"

"Sailing, sailing over the stormy sea,"

"The second line is just the same and ought to end in B"

"Full many a stormy wind shall blow o-o-oh when"

"Jack comes home—again!"

Thus ended Helen, and as a song "Sailing" was considered a first-rate joke.

"Now," said Margaret, in a plain everyday speaking voice, "I'm not going to spoil my 'Little Jack,' with any such parody as that. I'm going to recite him."

"Hear! Hear!" ordered Captain Mae.

"I'm not sure I can recall all of it, but it's a pretty story—so"

"Yes, Margy, a story is better than a song, tell it," begged Louise, settling down deeper in the leather cushions.

"But I may have to hum it, to get in rhyme," soliloquized the narrator.

"Yes, that's better still," cut in Cleo. "Give us the hum."

"Do be quiet, girls, or we will get neither song nor hum nor story," said Helen. "Go ahead, Margaret. Tell it your own way, as they say in court trials."

Again Margaret was directed to take up her Little Jack.

"It begins by calling the mates to come around-around-around——"

"The hearth," suggested Julia.

"Hearth on the sea!" cried Margaret in scorn.

"I'll fine the next girl who interrupts," announced Captain Mae. "Go on, Maggie."

"I'll skip the introduction, I have to," Margaret admitted, struggling with a laugh, "but I know these lines:

"It was on the Spanish Main——

"And in a night of rain—then I have to skip again, but you will understand the story," braved Margaret. "The sailors saw something, I just have to insert that clause," she contributed, "then it goes:

* * * * *

"So far from any coast, we thought it was a ghost,

"And lowers a boat to see what it might be,

"Where on its mother's breast a little one did rest,

"The mother dead—the babe alive and well!"

* * * * *

"Oh, just like Kitty's story," interrupted Cleo in spite of orders.

"Certainly, that's the reason I'm suffering so to tell it," admitted Margaret.

"Does the song say what they did with the little one?" asked Julia, always intensely sympathetic.

"Yes, listen," again ordered Margaret. "The story tells:

"Now we're a rough old set, some are fathers, don't forget,"

"But—but I can't think of that line, I should have told you "Our skipper seized the boy, and kisses him with joy——"

This was almost the end for Margaret, if not the end of the song, for they all seized the girl and smothered her with kisses.

"But it was a lovely story, Margy, if bald in spots," commented Cleo. "What's the chorus?"

Again Margaret started, this time in tune:

* * * * *

"Singing eylie—heevie ho!

"Eylie heevie ho!

"Send the wheel around say we!

"While gayly blows the breeze,

"That takes us o'er the seas!

"Singing eylie, heevie, eylie heevie ho!"

* * * * *

"Hurrah! Hurray! Hurroo!" called Louise.

"That's all right for a sea story, Margaret, and we'll have to make a line of it in our Log. But poor little Kitty didn't fare so well. See it was a boy, 'they kissed him with joy,'" she explained. "Being a girl poor Kitty was just dumped."

"Oh, yes, one more line," persisted Margaret:

“Then we names him Little Jack, and kissing he don’t lack!”

Needless to say what happened to Margaret at that!

Then, to give the Westbrook girls the full benefit of their information, the story of Kitty was told in detail, and even these young ladies confessed to a keen interest in the mystery of Luna Land.

“We must make a landing, and spend an hour in the woods before returning,” suggested Eugenia as they skirted the shore.

“There’s a beautiful rocky point, Mae. We can easily sail in the cove, and let the girls scamper around there.”

And this was the plan immediately decided upon.

CHAPTER XV.

STRANDED

TIME flew as the girls scampered over rocks, slid down sandy slopes, and otherwise "explored" the picturesque retreat.

No accident marred the afternoon, beyond the unexpected slide of Cleo, who, venturing too near the edge, came down to the water's brink by way of a sliding, sandy trail.

Everybody had been in wading, choosing a shallow pool that trickled in from the bay and hid behind a wall of sand, now plainly marked, as the tide was receding.

"Come, girls, we must be moving," warned Mae, "a sail boat depends on wind and tide for safe navigation."

Reluctantly they left the sand, for this strip of rocky woods was attractive to the point of positive fascination.

With a friendly breeze they were soon under full sail again, and the voyage home promised too prompt an ending to their day's sport. They would have prolonged it.

"Couldn't we sail in and out that group of

islands?" asked Grace, reluctant to reach port too early.

"We might," agreed Mae, "if we were sure to be safe from sand bars."

"Water's splendidly deep," her sister at the tiller assured her. "We may as well let the girls see all the sights."

Accordingly, the Blowell was directed toward the islands, that seemed like mere splashes of green, spilled on the blue water.

In and out they went in apparent safety, every one enjoying the close land sailing, and the glimpses of varied woodlands these little islands exhibited.

"Tide's going out fast," called Mae, as the sail swung north.

Eugenia did not reply. She thought she felt something scrape.

A grinding sound assured her, she *had* heard scraping—and she knew the feel of sand.

They stopped like a canoe running out of the waves!

"Sand bar!" shouted Mae, but none of the girls knew just what that meant.

Opening the sail, clear of every reef, Mae tried to get off the bar, and Eugenia urged the tiller to try one spot, then another; but the Blowell stood still, and defied the breeze or water to move her.

"Can't we go?" asked Cleo, just beginning to realize their predicament.

"Not unless we are lifted," replied Mae gloomily.

"Do you mean to tell us we are stuck?" asked Louise.

"That's the simplest way of putting it," replied Eugenia.

"Then," said Grace, still imbued with the spirit of fun. "Where do we go from here?"

"That's a delicate question," replied Helen, for both Mae and Eugenia were too busy to pay heed to nonsense.

For some time they tried all tactics known to navigators caught in a similar predicament, then finally settled down to make the best of a bad bargain.

"Why can't we go in to shore on the little boat?" asked Grace, still anxious to try the dory.

"What good would that do us?" asked Mae.

"Some one may be camped there," Grace added further.

"Even so, a camper couldn't move the Blowell more than we can," said Eugenia.

"Our only hope is a tow," reflected Mae, "and I don't see a launch, and no launch could ever see us in this pocket."

"I'm so sorry I suggested the islands," said Grace contritely. "Of course, I'm a very green sailor."

"Not your fault in the least," Eugenia assured. "We should have known better."

"And when may the tide come in?" asked Julia innocently.

"Some time A. M.," said Mae, hiding her concern with a brave show of indifference.

"Do you mean to say we must stay out here all night?" gasped Helen.

"I hate to say it, but it may be true," said Mae slowly. "Still, a launch may loom up. Any provisions left?"

At this the remains of their lunch were dragged out from the cabin, and as they viewed the most glorious sunset they had ever witnessed, they munched crumbs, and tried to keep up their spirits, which were plainly going down with the ball of red gold.

It was a gloomy prospect. No way of sending a message home, no one to give them a tow, and as Cleo put it just "nobody nor nawthin'."

It was fast coming nightfall! Brave as they were the scouts worried more about the home folks than they did at their own predicament.

"If I could only let mama know!" sighed Julia with a melancholy look at the only things moving, and they were merely sunset clouds.

"Never give up," counselled Mae. "We are in no danger, at least that is something."

"What's that song about the 'dove on the mast'?" asked Cleo moodily. "Something about he did mourn, and mourn and mourn."

"Don't you dare perpetrate that," said Mae. "You are thinking of the famous old sob song,

'Oh, Fair Dove, oh, Fond Dove'. But please forget it. It does not fit in the picture."

"Just the same," insisted Grace, "I think we ought to go in to that island. See how dark it is getting, and there might be some help there."

With an amount of coaxing Grace and Cleo, with Eugenia and Helen, were finally allowed to row into shore, and as the water was perceptibly shallow, it was decided by Mae, as captain, that the little trip could be made in perfect safety.

"I must stay with the Blowell," she said, "as I might feel an under current strong enough to move us. Don't delay too long."

They were glad to leave the sail boat, if only temporarily. It had become monotonous, if not actually gloomy to sit there, longing to move.

A short pull brought the dory on to land, and briskly the girls sprang ashore. Along the edge just a stretch of sand, untraveled, greeted them.

"No footprints here," Grace remarked. "But it's nice and smooth; a lovely little island."

"Yes, if we were merely looking for nature's beauties," replied Eugenia. "But just now we would rather run across a stuttering telephone."

"There is a wireless station somewhere around here," said Cleo. "I remember reading about it being outside of Sandy Hook."

"Do you suppose we are outside of any-

thing?" asked Helen. "I feel we are tied with a drawstring in nature's hip pocket."

"Here's a footprint," called Cleo. "Just look; here's a sign!"

All ran toward her and found tacked on a tree a crudely marked cardboard. On this they managed to decipher the words, "Peter Pan" and "Take me to Mama."

"Perhaps some picnic children left that here," decided Eugenia. "No other sign of mortal habitation about."

"Yes, here is a child's shovel and pail, and a lot of child's play tools," said Helen.

"Relics of the same outing party," commented Louise. "Just see if you can't dig up something more humanly tangible, Helen."

Dusk made the woods almost dark, and lest they should stray too far inland Mae was to give signals on her police whistle. Three short and two long would mean "hurry back." Occasionally they stopped to listen for the call.

"Some child has been digging here very recently," insisted Cleo. "This sand and clay are damp yet."

"The picnic might have been to-day," Louise replied.

"You're not very encouraging Weasie. Just see how deep this hole is, and how it is being dug—like—a tunnel."

Every one followed Cleo's plea for an investigation, and at each turn they seemed to

come upon more toys and tools, such as little boys play with.

"And here's another sign," called Helen. "On yellow paper, too."

This brought the scouts to close attention. The sign was evidently an attempt at a message, and carried the same words "Peter Pan" and "Bring me to Mamma," but with it was a pathetically written word "Please," through the letters of which were crudely drawn, by surely a childish hand, the quaintest little flowers.

"Just see!" said Cleo. "No child on a picnic would take time to draw flowers in a sign." She turned over the card and found on the reverse side the words that might mean "I—dig—out——"

Eugenia who was familiar with kindergarten work, readily recognized this as an attempt made by some child who had been taught to make floral words to indicate loving messages. She was turning the paper over carefully when the signal for "Hurry Back" was sounded shrilly on the police whistle.

"Hurry, hurry, hurry!" called Eugenia, and scampering through the woods, they jumped into their little boat and started off, Cleo still carrying the two Peter Pan messages.

Reaching the clearance they could see a launch pulled up beside the Blowell.

"Oh, joy!" fairly screamed Helen. "A launch!"

It did not take long to row back to the sand bar, where Mae had already been towed off, out into the welcome deep water.

"Oh, how splendid! Just in time!" they shouted, and Eugenia had difficulty in requiring that they sit still and not spill overboard.

Reaching the sailboat, never was found a happier face than Mae's.

"Oh, girls, I told you not to give up," she greeted them. "Just see our rescuer, Mr. Neal Nelson from the Colonade."

"Oh, my little choker's brother!" exclaimed Julia, too delighted to think of the usual formalities.

"And as I live, if it isn't—Bobby's life saver!" declared the young man. "Well, turn about is surely fair play, and I'm glad I got my innings in."

"However did you find us?" asked Julia when they were making sure the Blowell could "sail under her own steam" as Neal put it.

"I didn't—I just happened by. Out trying my new motor boat——"

"She's a beauty," commented Mae, feeling foolish as she uttered the words, for any old tug boat would have been a beauty under the circumstances.

How differently everything looked now! It

was almost worth while being in peril to experience the joy of rescue.

"How did you like it over there?" called Neal, who was now keeping close enough alongside the Blowell to permit of conversation.

"Nice little island," answered Cleo. "I guess picnickers like it there."

"I fancy not," replied the young man. "Folks are not invited over there, I understand."

"Why?" questioned Eugenia, who was interested in the kindergarten effort discovered on the island.

"Nobody knows and nobody cares," he replied, using the words of the latest popular song.

"We're going back there some day," declared Grace. "Found signs and things never left there by the Indians."

"Indians live there yet, I should think," replied Neal, turning on some more gas to keep up with the pace the Blowell was making.

"What's the name of that island, do you know?" called Grace.

"Surely," he replied, with a laugh in his boyish voice. "That's the famous Luna Land!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE BAREFOOT GIRLS

LOOK! LOOK!" shrieked Grace. "That's Luna Land!"

"Oh, isn't that too stupid!" added Cleo, almost in dismay. "To think we were wandering around there and didn't know it."

"But how were we fooled?" asked Julia, also showing signs of keen disappointment.

"Don't you see we went in on the other side," explained Helen. "That's the pocket and just as I thought we were in the old hip pocket. Isn't that too mean!"

Eugenia and Mae were now made aware of the girls' eager expectations for a trip to that island, and when every one had finally been convinced that the trip had really been made without the least suspicion of its consummation, there seemed nothing to do but demand a good laugh from the odd occurrence.

All stood up to watch the very last speck of green, as Luna Land disappeared, and only the added interest and anxiety, consequent upon their delay, and the need to hasten back to the waiting home folks, tended to break the spell.

"To have actually been on that island!" repeated Grace, trying to realize it.

"And to have gathered signs there," put in Cleo. "Glad I took them along, although I did so unconsciously."

"We must have a troop meeting to-morrow," said Margaret. "This alters everything."

"I think it simply turns on the gasoline," remarked Grace. "Now, we know something about Looney Land."

Neal was leading in his new launch, and the Blowell followed as proudly as if nothing had occurred to spoil her trip. It was almost dark, but not quite, as the long summer evening stayed and over-stayed, to the benefit of the belated sailors.

"There's Leonore and Ben," sang out Grace, as they caught sight of the blue car waiting at the landing.

"Also Gerald and—yes, it's Isabel," called Helen, for from her family car a girl in Isabel's green sweater was waving merrily to the incoming craft.

Explanations with details of delays on a sailboat seemed entirely superfluous, and with creditable good sense the stranded party was welcomed home, without the worry of sighs or sobs.

"But why did you go to the city to-day of all days?" Cleo demanded of Isabel. "We

have had the event of the season, and you should have been among those present."

"The dentist," explained Isabel, making room for her chums in the car. "Nothing on earth but a tyrannical dentist could drag me away from Sea Crest in mid season."

"Well, I thought it must have been something urgent," Cleo conceded. "But, Izzy love! We have been to Luna Land!"

"You didn't tell us!" charged Elizabeth. She had been to the city with Isabel.

"We didn't know," returned Cleo. "It was an accident—a miraculous accident."

Followed such snatchy bits of explanation as might be given on the short ride home. Isabel and Elizabeth seemed quite as much absorbed in the fact that their friend Neal had a new motor boat as did they in the revelation concerning Luna Land.

The evening attraction of moonlight bathing served to divert, temporarily, the girls' keen interest in holding a True Tred meeting immediately. Every one wanted to go straight back to the island—no dogs had devoured them, no lunatics were discovered up trees, no ghosts had been noticed ambling about the grove, and why had they even hesitated to explore there? Each demanded an answer from each, but none replied.

Moonlight, like all the other released atmospheric beauties, came "double barreled," and

crowds flocked to the beach for the novelty of evening bathing.

"And of course, we're too young," grumbled Isabel. "I just wonder if the water is the same day as night. Come on, let's wade."

This was the signal for wading preparations. In a sheltered corner under the board walk, the girls divested themselves of their shoes and stockings, scampered back to the edge and encountered knee deep waves or wavelets.

"Wading is really decorous in the dark," boomed Elizabeth. "It's lots more fun than even bathing in daylight."

"But not as good as swimming," replied Louise, who had just allowed her pretty pink scarf-sash to come in contact with the ruinous salt water.

At the sound of the nine-thirty gong—it was the village fire alarm that always sounded the hour—the scouts as well as the other merry-makers hurried to dress. True, they had but to don stockings and pumps, but the beach crowds scattered so quickly, it was necessary to hurry, or run the risk of being alone with the crabs.

"Where did you put the things?" Cleo called to Grace. "I don't see them here."

"Left them exactly against the third post from the steps, coming toward the shoe black stand," Grace indicated.

"That would be all right on an income tax

blank," sang out Cleo, after a fruitless search, "but it does not betray the boots. They're not here."

"Oh lands, hurry!" begged Elizabeth. "We shall be all alone with Davy Jones or Mr. McGinty or whoever it is who janities the ocean by night. Let's all look."

No need for this proposal for all were looking; they needed pumps and stockings, but none could be found.

"Are you sure you left them here?" asked Louise again.

"Positive," replied Grace.

"And I saw them when I went for my bag," said Elizabeth. "I remember now, I left the pocket flash light burning—forgot to turn it off."

"You left a light in the sand by our things!" exclaimed Cleo. "Brilliant Betty! Well, why wouldn't the small boys walk off with them, either for fun or profit."

"I see nothing to do but play hop scotch home," said Helen dolefully. "And they were my best patent leathers."

"My silk stockings broke the family bank," chimed in Louise. "Mother had just declared they would be the very last pair."

"Let's go to the pier and beg matches," suggested Isabel. "I don't fancy skipping all the way to Third Avenue 'as is,' whatever way that may be, but I believe it applies to any sort of

goods not up to the best mark, and with bare feet I don't feel quite par excellence."

"Still you do the Greek dances beautifully," consoled Louise. "Let us take this philosophically. We have lost our booties and we must go home. Now let's——" and she raced off with all the barefoot scouts after her.

Not that they minded that in the least, but the loss of silk stockings and pumps was not a good joke, even to the jolly True Treds.

Danger of broken glass and alighting on sharp pebbles varied the hopping, skipping and jumping, until the last scout dusted her toes and tried to explain the bare-foot stunt to surprised relatives.

Early next morning, that portion of the beach where the clothing had been lost was visited, first by one, and then another, until without arranging to do so, the whole party had again assembled.

"What shall we do about it?" asked Grace. "No use allowing any one to get away with five pairs of pumps and stockings."

"Besides a flash light and my bag," inserted Elizabeth.

"I guess we will have to put a sign on the post office," suggested Cleo.

This was met with a howl of ridicule.

"Can you imagine everybody devouring a neat little sign that stated five pairs of stockings——?" Grace asked.

"Oh, don't," begged Helen. "Let's do without them and wear sneaks. If we all set in to wearing them folks will think they are the very latest thing in footgear," she said pompously.

"Look what I dug up," Cleo exclaimed, displaying a rather disfigured pair of tennis shoes. "Jerry decorated them last summer, when he was trying out some new water colors. See that emblem there?" pointing to something like a wish-bone design. "Well, that's his frat emblem," she told her companions.

"Then it's decided we let the shoes go, and all our poor luck with them," said Isabel. "But I do feel rather mournful about my pretty buckles."

"Let's hie to the bungalow, and talk over our delayed plans to further invade Luna Land," called out Louise, poised on a treacherous sand heap. "I'm just dying for another try at that mystery."

In the conclave it was decided to ask Neal for a ride in his lovely new motor boat.

"That will be the safest way to go," said Louise, "as it would afford the quickest chance of getting away."

"Nothing to be afraid of," Cleo said disdainfully.

"How do we know?" argued Isabel. "Just because no bears jumped out at us is not proof there were none up the trees."

"Bears don't climb the trees," retorted Elizabeth.

"Well, *we* might have to and it's just the same," insisted Isabel.

"Do you know," said Cleo. "I wouldn't be surprised if some little child over there is playing Peter Pan!"

"That's nothing. Every child plays Peter Pan," cut in Margaret. "Didn't you tell us Mary Dunbar went up a tree at Bellaire?"

"Yes, but I mean a child who is living out the character, if that explains it more clearly," said Cleo.

"Nothing startling about that either," commented Helen, who admitted she was fairly "sizzling" for a mystery.

"Maybe Bentley wrote those signs," said Julia.

"Bentley!" exclaimed Grace. "That big boy wrote 'Take me to mama'! Julia, Julia, Julia! Are you as far gone as that?"

"He could write them for fun, couldn't he?" fired back the much tantalized girl.

"Well, he could, of course, but how would he get the fun out of doing a thing like that? No, we have to look either for a freak or a poor neglected child. Now, True Treds, take your choice!" advised Louise.

"I choose the freak," decided Cleo. "Freaks are funny."

"And I take the chee-i-ld!" trilled Grace,

"children need to be cared for, and True Treds should help."

"Whatever will Captain Dave think when he hears we have been on the forbidden ground?" asked Louise. "I care more for his opinion than for anything else."

"Guess we all do," said Margaret seriously. "We wouldn't like him to think we actually defied him."

"But wasn't it the most delicious joke," Grace reminded them. "When I didn't die a sudden death as Neal called out 'Why, that's Luna Land!' I will tell you girls, I am doomed to a ripe old age."

"Suppose we go right down now, and tell Captain Dave all about it?" proposed Louise. "I shall feel better when the dark secret is off my conscience."

"A wise plan," declared Margaret, "but I don't like these slippers for a walk at this hour, too near bathing time. Anybody going in to-day?"

"Surely, but there's plenty of time yet," argued Grace. "All in favor of a trip to Captain Dave's—run."

Along the grassy edge of Glimmer Lake it was only a short run to the life saving station and, just as they hoped, the genial captain sat outside, in his big, strong chair, smoking the faithful pipe.

"You can never guess where we have been,

Captain?" Cleo began quickly, as the girls were able to flock about.

"Oh, yes I can," he replied to their surprise. "You been over to the island."

They were astonished. Who had told him in so short a time?

"How did you know?" asked Grace.

"Little bird," mumbled the captain. He did seem a trifle serious for him.

"Not the carrier pigeon?" asked Louise. "And you don't mind, do you Captain Dave?"

"We had no idea of going," Helen hurried to say, before the seaman could answer.

"So you got stranded?" he asked, as usual bringing his helpless pipe into play.

Then followed an account of the accident that ended in the precipitous visit to Luna Land.

"But who told you about it, Captain?" asked Grace once more.

"Kitty," he replied simply.

"Kitty saw us!" Margaret gasped. The surprise intended for Captain Dave had been diverted, it appeared.

"Yes, Kitty was there; but she saw what happened, as she explained it to me, and she knew you wouldn't stay long," explained the old sailor.

"But why didn't she speak to us?" pouted Cleo.

"Guess she thought it was safer to let you get off quietly as you got on," replied the Cap-

tain, and his deep set eyes wandered out over that familiar sea, although his audience wondered what ever he could see there to hold his attention after so many years of watching.

"I think she might have trusted us," said Helen, showing something like resentment.

"It likely was not that," the captain assured the girls. "She'd trust you, I'm sure, but she might not trust others," he finished mysteriously.

They seemed further than ever now from their purpose. The captain was rather reticent, though usually so genial, in fact, for the first time the scouts felt as if their visit might not be entirely welcome.

Could he be displeased with them? The language of their glances asked that question plainly.

"But we did have the awfulest time," Louise broke the awkward silence. "Captain, it's lovely to sail, and our Blowell was like a sea queen, until we struck that sand bar, then she stuck like—like the Brooklyn Bridge, not a thing could move her. We did break a couple of oars trying to pry ourselves loose, but a sand bar is a mighty power when you hit it wrong side up," finished Louise, proud of her attempt to interest the rather silent captain.

"Anything wrong, Captain?" Grace asked, with her usual directness. "You look worried."

"Maybe I am a bit," he admitted. "But nothing very serious," and he made his pipe serve to emphasize the fact.

"Could we help you?" inquired Helen simply.

The old sea man smiled and reached over to pat her shoulders. She was sitting on the steps, and he sat just above in the hickory arm chair.

"I've been tryin' to figure out who might help me," he replied finally, "and I've about concluded you little girls would be as safe as anybody. And queer thing, too—" he went on. "You're the first—who ever offered to help old Dave, though many a one *he* has pulled out of that briny."

The girls moved closer to the hickory chair. Not one felt she could break that spell by speaking.

"But it will be quite a story," continued the captain, "and it is nigh on to eight bells now. Suppose you come around here this afternoon after your swim—no, best after dinner," he corrected himself. "The men have to eat on the stroke of twelve, then we have drill, and some government messages to explain—make it two-thirty," he said finally, "and we'll see what we can do."

CHAPTER XVII

A BELIC FROM THE ALAMEDA

EAGER for the captain's story every scout was on hand promptly at two-thirty. The captain dusted off the wooden settee, and pulled out all his chairs, for the True Treds were meeting as if in council.

"It's about Kitty," he began. "Of course, you have guessed that. But what set me on this course was the way you have made friends with that heedless one. Seems to me you would stick by her in a pinch."

"We surely would, Captain," spoke up Grace, and her voice had in it the ring of the familiar "Aye, aye, sir."

"Well, you see," went on the captain, "she's so queer, no one makes friends with her. But from the furst I was a'watchin' you 'uns, as they say at Old Point, and I was curious to see if she was going to scare you off, as she had done to all the others."

"I guess she tried," Louise could not refrain from interrupting, for the memory of Kitty's throw of the paste board box was still vivid.

"Yes, she tried, and she has told me how she plagued you, but accordin' to Kitty you wouldn't quit."

"Not exactly quitters," ventured Cleo.

From his smile of approval it was plain the captain agreed with every interruption, and they seemed to whet his interest in the story he had undertaken to tell. He continued:

"Just noticin' and watchin' I says to myself, there is the very thing Kitty has always needed; girls, real live, jolly girls; and she ain't never had none."

He expressed himself more pathetically when he fell into the vernacular. "No sir, she ain't never had none," he repeated. "Then along you come, just for the summer, and she tried every blusterin' trick she could make use of to scare you off, to sort of bamboozle you, but you stick, and so, she's sort of givin' in. Especially since you befriended old Pete. That won her sure."

"She told us that she appreciated that," said Cleo. "But it was only fun to drive him to the landing. Of course, he wouldn't hear of us driving around to the Point, from where he could more easily have gone across to the island."

"Now then, thinking all those things over, and puttin' two and two together, as you might say, I've sort of concluded to ask you to do something more. And I almost feel I know

your answer," pursued the well-trained narrator.

"You surely must know it, Captain," Cleo assured him. "I am acting captain of this troop—the True Tred. I am really only troop leader for the summer, but the girls call me captain, and I can speak for every one here, I know, when I say, we will do our utmost to help you, or to fulfill any trust you may offer."

At this the True Treds arose, and quite seriously gave their salute. So impressed was old Captain Dave, that he also tilted himself out of his tip chair, and likewise saluted. No one smiled—they were now engaged in serious work as True Treds.

"That's fine," he said heartily. "I tell you my boys can't beat that at drillin'. I just wish I could get a girl's team working some day," he complimented. "Wouldn't wonder if you could do as well as some boys.

"But back to Kitty," and his pipe was thoroughly emptied on the little tin plate at his elbow. "You see, the night her poor little mother was swung in from the Alameda with that youngster in her arms, we were too busy to do much but try to keep the freezin' folks alive. She had talked some to the little girl, and she had asked me to look out for the luggage.

"Well, when Mrs. Schulkill dies on the way to the hospital, and her name appears in the

list of those lost, along comes Kitty's relatives, the folks they were comin' to live with. I turned over the luggage and all that sort of stuff we could get off the Alameda before she foundered, but I just made up my mind I'd keep an eye on Kitty. Also, I'd hold on to her papers a bit, 'til these folks really proved they were good friends to the orphan." He shook his head in decision at the memory.

"I've done that," he declared, "and I have the papers. Now, they worry me some. How do I know what'll happen to me? I'm gettin' old, and the seas are pretty rough at times."

He paused, and the girls noticed how gray his face looked, and how haggard and heavily lined.

"This packet of papers was in a tin box," he then explained. "Kitty's mother was comin' home from Holland, and being a widow, she kept all her little belongings with her. I have them in the same little box, and as I have glanced over them I just feel they'll be mighty interestin' when the girl gets sense enough to understand them.

"Now, I've thought of turnin' them over to a lawyer here, but what would that mean? A fee; of course, I have no fee, neither has Kitty. Then, if I trust some one around here, they'll likely go pokin' into them, curious like; and I don't want to do a thing like that to the mother who left her little girl in my arms."

He stroked his beard thoughtfully. The pa-

pers were plainly a considerable responsibility to carry. He looked out over the sea again, and shook his head thoughtfully.

"Are they letters or documents?" asked Cleo.

"Little of both," replied the captain. "And this is my plan. You girls must know some organization that would just take this little responsibility off Dave's shoulders."

"Certainly," spoke up Louise. "The Girl Scouts have a very trustworthy headquarters, and if this particular piece of work was not ours we could very readily place it where it belongs."

"Exactly, just exactly. That's what I've been a-thinkin'," said the Captain.

"There are Children's Aids, Travellers' Aids and all sorts of legal aids for just such purposes," said Margaret, "and if we bring anything confidential to the secretary at our headquarters, you may rest assured it will be placed where it belongs."

"Now, isn't that fine!" exclaimed the old sailor. "But you are not goin' up to the city soon, I take it, and I've just got a notion I'd like them papers put in safer quarters. No tellin' when I may be transferred, and then I wouldn't have time to think of the little tin box. Could one of you take it now, and put it in your family safe?" he asked.

The girls looked at one another speculatively.

No one was personally anxious to assume such a responsibility.

"Louise, you're daddy is a lawyer. He would know all about a thing like that. You take it?" urged Margaret.

After some discussion Louise finally agreed to accept the charge and old Dave shuffled over to his cupboard, procured a rusty tin box, and placed it in the scout's hand.

"There," he said with a sigh of relief. "I'm glad to get rid of that. It was like the little bundle of letters tied with blue ribbon, that we read about in love stories—not much to the world, but a lot to the right girl," he orated.

Louise looked at the box almost reverently. Just as Dave had said "not much to the world but a lot to the right girl," she thought.

"All right, Captain," she said bravely. "I am sure, simple as this is it does mean something, and as you say, Kitty is not yet wise enough to appreciate her mother's letters. So I accept the charge, and you may call upon me to report at any time you choose."

"Now, if I'm sent over to the Hook, I won't have to move quite so much," said Dave with something like a chuckle, for the box was a very small article to worry about in event of an ordinary moving. "Also," he continued, "I'll feel Kitty is in good hands with this sort of—well, sort of claim on your friendship," he

stammered. "You see, how wise I am, to link you together this way?"

It had been rather a serious half hour, and the True Treds were not prone to stay concentrated for any prolonged length of time. As it was, Isabel had been counting the blocks in the faded red table cover, and Helen was drawing pictures with a burnt match on the back of a marine magazine.

"Now, I've got some good news, after all the old mildewed stuff," said Captain Dave. "You have been wanting to see our men at drill. What would you say to coming down some morning soon—and—and—— Wonder would I be spilling the beans if I told you a secret?" he broke off.

"Trust us to pick them up carefully if you do, Captain," volunteered Cleo.

"Well, here's the news," and he sank lower in his chair, dropped his head deeper on his shoulders, and seemed to assume the most secretive and confidential air. "Listen," he commanded. "The Boy Scouts are to have a wig wag trial. They may have been a little mite jealous of your reputation, or something like that, anyhow, they've fixed it up to do a grand stand stunt, and they've enlisted the Beach Patrol——"

"But we have been begging for that all summer," interrupted Grace immediately on the offensive.

"I recall that, and it's why I am spilling the beans. Why can't you all join in?"

"With the Boy Scouts?" It was Louise who spoke.

"Certainly," Margaret hurried to say. "Why not? They will enter us if we send an application. Oh, goody-good! Louise run right home with the tin box, lock it in the safe and come have a troop meeting," sang out Margaret.

"Don't have to say where you heard the news, do you?" asked the captain with a chuckle.

"Certainly not," declared Cleo. "Besides, we know exactly where we can verify it. Come on, girls. Let's interview the clerk at the landing soda fountain. You remember he told us he was a scout."

They all remembered, and ran thither forthwith, as Grace would say.

"To think of the boys planning to outdo us in glory," Cleo reflected. "Well, we had better be busy, True Treds, and get ready to prove our mettle."

It was exciting even to anticipate, and that the Boy Scouts were going to considerable trouble in their preparations now dawned forcibly upon the girls.

"That's what all the wig wag practising has been for," Margaret declared. "I have seen the boys on the beach every morning so early.

I'm sure they know the code backwards and forwards."

"Exactly," agreed Louise. "How many brought manuals?"

"I did," replied Julia, but it was a solo.

"Then, we will all have to look over your shoulder, Julia dear," said Cleo. "It would be dreadful if we missed a letter."

"How are we going to get in the contest though? That's what worries me," declared Helen.

"First, find out all about it," advised Cleo practically. "Then, follow the advice of our friend what's-his-name at the landing. Louise, be careful of Kitty's papers," she ordered. "Isn't it lovely to have won the confidence of Captain Dave?"

"Lovelier still to live up to it," replied Louise, in her best oratorical tone, "I would have preferred some one else to take the tin box, but since I have it, I suppose I'll have to sit up nights watching it," she deplored.

"Lucky it's only letters, and not deeds to some monarchy," put in Helen. "But count on all of us, Weasie dear, to stand by you in case of any safe-blowing at midnight."

"I'm so excited about the contest, I can almost forget Kitty and Luna Land," gurgled Margaret. They were running along the lake-side, up to the river landing, with the hope of gaining the boy's confidence over nut sundaes.

"He's there! That's lucky!" Helen said, sighting in the open pavilion, the desired Boy Scout, just in the act of sizzling a soda.

"And he has on a clean apron, a good sign," said Margaret under her breath.

Tables nearest the water and farthest from land (thus most secluded) were chosen, and favorite frappes were smilingly ordered.

"Listen to catch his name," whispered Cleo, but a call for "Tommie" voided the suggestion. Tommie fetched their sundaes in that miraculous way waiters have of carrying cup and saucers heaped up, just as jugglers catch them.

"Been practicin'?" inquired Grace glibly.

"What for?" asked Tommie, whisking his towel over the table.

"Why, for the contest," answered Grace, as if the whole world should know that.

"Oh, yes a little," admitted Tommie, gliding off to a new customer.

"Didn't notice that he waved any program," said Louise.

"Don't give up," Margaret encouraged. "I could manage another sundae."

"So could I if I had the price," said Helen dryly.

Cleo tapped on the table and Tommie sauntered back.

"Say Tommie, you know we are strangers here," she began adroitly, "and don't know a single Girl Scout in town, and we are supposed

to keep up our activities. How do we get in the contest?"

"Who told you about it?" he asked, his face betraying the fatal boyish weakness of succumbing to girls' flattering attention.

"Why, folks are talking about it, of course," went on Cleo sweetly. "It promises to be a big event."

"Bet your life," and the secret spring had been tapped. "That will be some event. We wanted to flash a surprise, but you being Girl Scouts, I think you ought to be in it."

"Of course, we should," came a chorus.

"Tell you what I'll do. I'll propose it at to-night's meeting. I saw you girls save the Bentley chap, and I know you're game," he said stoutly, "so I don't see why not."

"Good for you, Tommie!" Helen wanted to cheer. "And when they put you up for office, just let the True Treds know."

"That's right, Tommie," Cleo assured the blushing boy. "We'll see you through."

And why shouldn't they? As Tommie said: "I don't see why not."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WIG WAG RESCUE

THEY'LL be sure to enjoy the shouting," Julia remarked, "but aside from that, I don't see what interest spectators can possibly work up in a wig wag contest."

"We almost agree with you, Julie," said Grace, "but don't you know everything, including bad weather, is interesting at the beach?"

"All right, scouty, I'm glad of it, for I think it is going to be simply great. And wasn't it splendid to get the sanction of headquarters?"

"Trust Cleo to take care of the official end," replied Grace. "Don't forget to-day is the day, and the pier is the place."

Signs of activity about the life saving station always gathered a crowd, and to-day the appearance of the men in uniform, pulling out the life lines, hoisting the buoys and running the life boat down to the water, drew more than the usual number of spectators.

It was Scout Day and everybody seemed to know it.

The boys having agreed to accept the challenge of the girls, in true scout chivalry, now offered the girls every possible courtesy, even to choice of place at which to stand for the wig wag try out.

It was arranged that Captain Dave's men were to row outside the fish nets, and wait there for their code to be waved to them for a "wreck off the hook." The exactness and quickness with which the message was waved was to be judged by a committee of citizens with the mayor as the honorary leader.

It had all been carefully planned as a summer attraction, and the scouts were to share in honors for their respective troops.

The blare of the firemen's band, affording more blare than music, proclaimed the time had come for a start, and the crack of Mayor Jones' revolver gave the signal for a race through the sand to gain places.

Cleo, Grace, Margaret and Louise won the post for True Treds, they having outdistanced the boys who were led by Tommie Johnson, and who was said to stumble purposely so that the girls might reach the pier first. However that might be, the True Treds liked Tommie, and he seemed to like them "pretty well," as Grace expressed it.

No chance for holding conversation as a contest preliminary, for the four scouts were scattered at regular distances over the five

hundred foot pier, while the boys on the sand, were dotted at similar distances, each armed with the red and white signal flag.

An exhibition of signalling was first presented, and this evoked generous applause from the crowds that jammed the board walk. Naturally the girls from their platform on the pier, "looked the prettiest," but the way they flashed their code did not admit of any self consciousness on the score of looks.

In a brief interval Grace waved to Louise a message in the True Tred secret code, and this was taken up by Cleo and Margaret who relayed it to Helen and Julia in their positions on the beach.

"Grace says 'nervous,' " whispered Helen, "and she is never nervous. I wonder what she means?"

"Just joking, I guess. No, see they are sending 'a,' that's error, of course," replied Julia, holding her own flag up in the interrogatory slant.

But the signal for the second event precluded any possibility of following out the private messages and presently all were again wrapped in attention at the silent waving contest—that language of distance, copied from the trees, and fashioned from the winds.

"Look! Look!" gasped Julia. "Louise is waving danger! What can be the matter."

Frantically the little scout on the extreme end

of the pier was spelling "danger," then shooting her flag out to demand "attention."

"Oh, it's some one on the water," whispered Helen, fearful of causing a panic in that crowd.

"And she is signalling the life boat," gasped Julia. "But how far is it away?"

Suddenly Louise was seen to throw her flag high in the air, and dive from the pier!

Shouts, screams, and yells rent the air!

"The boat, the guard, the life line!" the air itself seemed to form the words, but only that speck at the end of the pier could be seen now, bobbing up and down, then—yes—it was a little boat, a canoe! That was what the scout had dived for!

If ever they had occasion to summon and use courage, the scouts, both boys and girls, had need of it now. Along the boardwalk the excitement was so intense as to cause danger of children being trampled on, and in this emergency those Girl Scouts not on the pier helped the Boy Scouts in efforts to prevent disaster.

But it was that tiny spot on the water that held the crowd with a bated breath.

"She must drown! Oh, that lovely girl!" they were gasping.

"Louise won't drown," said Julia, her face white as the muslin in her flag.

"No, Weasie *can* swim," Helen assured her, holding her arm very tight, and begging comfort in the embrace.

"And we can't even get near her," moaned Julia, who just then had rescued a very little tot from a plunge down the high steps into the street.

"The line, the boat, they have her!" came another shout, and Julia wanted to sink on her knees.

"Oh, is the boat there? Can you see, Helen?" she begged.

"Yes, yes, it's the life boat, they have come! Didn't it seem an eternity?"

Instantly the accident occurred police officers had roped off the end of the pier to prevent any one rushing in, and now there stood at the steps the formidable ambulance.

"Oh, they must not take her to a hospital," wailed Helen. "Let us get to her, Julia. She will surely be all right in a little while."

"They are bringing them in a life boat," a gentlemen with marine glasses said. He had seen their distress and recognized their uniform.

"Oh, thank you, but how can we get to them?" begged Julia. "If only we could move through this awful crowd."

"I have a police whistle," he said. "I'll just blow it, and when the officer answers I'll explain. Remain quietly where you are."

The magic whistle shrilled its signal, and the crowd fell back, while the motorcycle officer answered. The gentleman quickly explained the

situation, and the two girls climbed to the rear seat of the motor, where they clung, as the officer piloted them through the autos and street crowds up to the pier.

"They're in! They're in!" the people were now shouting. But Julia and Helen were almost afraid to look.

Leaving his motorcycle at the boardwalk, the officer led the girls down on the sands where the life boat had just made shore.

"Who—is—it, with her?" breathed Julia, for they could now see that Louise sat up in the boat and had some one in her arms.

"It's Kitty!" shouted Helen. "She jumped to save Kitty. Oh, Louise, you darling! You brave little True Tred!" she cried. "Let me get to her."

In another moment Julia and Helen were with Cleo and Margaret, who had easily climbed down the pier, and were there when the boat came in. Scarcely speaking, the little group waited for a space to reach the life boat.

Louise, dripping, and sobbing just a little, sat in the skiff—with the seemingly lifeless form of Kitty in her arms. Quickly as landing was made one of the life savers picked up the unconscious girl, and rushed off with her, while another attempted to lift Louise.

"Oh, I'm all right," she protested. "I don't need any help at all."

But Captain Dave was there and he took no such chance.

"Here, my girl," he commanded in a voice of the seas. "Lean on me and come up to the station. Come along," this to the other scouts, "and you young ones keep back there," to the boys.

Louise took a few steps, then faltered. As if expecting this the captain stooped and lifted her in his arms, and it was a sight to remember, to see that old sailor, trudge along through the sands with the little girl scout almost on his broad shoulders.

And the remainder of the True Tred Troop were pressing along at his heels.

"Keep back there, keep away," warned the kind officer to the surging crowd, for the unspoken admiration for the Girl Scouts was now mounting high.

Tommie Johnson was so proud of "his friends" that something like mutiny seemed imminent in the boys' ranks.

"I told you, I told you!" he kept repeating, quite as if he had foretold the entire occurrence, when he only really referred to the courage of the Girl Scouts.

Up in the life saving station guards vied with one another in making hot tea, and giving such administrations as might benefit Louise, while she waited a few moments before being per-

mitted to get in any one of the many cars, offered to take her home.

"But I am really only wet now," she insisted finally, "and I want to get out of this heavy uniform."

Realizing her mother might have heard any of the possible wild rumors, Captain Dave helped her into Cleo's car and very proud indeed, was the old sailor, of the wig wag rescue.

"No surprise to me," he told his men. "Those girls have the grit many a boy might well boast of, and when I saw her drop from that pier I did not have to hold my breath. I knew she'd make it."

"But how did she see that speck of a canoe creep around the pier?" asked Jim Barstow, the oldest member of the crew next to Captain Dave.

"Maybe she felt it," said the captain. "'Taint likely much would happen to Kitty without that little girl feeling it." But his men knew nothing of the trust he was recalling, that might have formed the link of confidence between the scouts and Kitty Scuttle.

Elizabeth, wise little friend, had rushed from the pavilion to the home of Louise, to make sure no report of drowning should reach the ears of the anxious mother.

"It was the most glorious sight," Elizabeth was just insisting when Gerald drew up with

the blue car, and Louise jumped out into her mother's arms.

"Up to the hospital, Jerry," ordered Cleo. "We must see how Kitty is."

Julia and Helen went with Cleo, and it was their uniform, as usual, that served as a pass, admitting them to the hospital.

Kitty had been revived, and was now becoming obstreperous, she insisted on going home, and was loudly declaring her Uncle Pete would die of fright, when he missed her and the canoe.

At the entrance of Cleo and Julia (Helen did not come in) Kitty all but bounced out of the little white bed, and then, when she could get her thin arms around Cleo's neck—then the tears fell.

"That will be good for her," said the nurse very quietly to Julia. "She has been so wrought up, the outburst will relieve the strain."

But how Kitty could cry! And how she did yell! Cleo patted her shoulders and soothed her with every sort of affectionate protestation, but all the girl seemed to want to do was cry, and cry she did for so long a time, the scouts felt more helpless with her than they had in the real critical stage of the emergency.

"You be good, Kitty," said Cleo finally. "And I'll go right up to the landing and shout for Uncle Pete. Then, when he comes over, I'll tell him all about it—that is how you are per-

fectly all right," she corrected herself. "If you are very quiet, and good, maybe the nurse will let me in again to tell you what he says."

"And do you think I'm going to stay in this horspittal all night?" protested Kitty. "Don't I know what they did to my mother."

This started another outburst, and seeing the hysterical child was not apt to soon be quieted, the nurse insisted on her swallowing a dose of bromide, and at that juncture the girls quietly stole from the bedside.

Gerald "dropped" Julia at her cottage, then Cleo and Helen were driven to the landing. No need to shout over to the island, for Uncle Pete stood there, on the narrow dock, watching the road with anxious eyes.

It was hard to assure him of Kitty's safety, and only his personal knowledge of the power of the scouts, gleaned from his own experience when they had rescued him some weeks before, did finally allay his fears. "We'll fetch her back, first thing in the morning," they promised, and then they watched the old man pull his oars with a weary stroke, toward the lonely little island, called Luna Land.

CHAPTER XIX

THE GLORIOUS AFTERMATH

THE wig wag contest had furnished enough excitement at Sea Crest to constitute a nine day's wonder. Nothing short of an uncanny power seemed attributed to the Girl Scout, who would risk her own life in a dive from that pier, when she saw a canoe upset beneath. The whole occurrence had been so spectacular that the publicity it provoked was widespread—every one was talking of the wig wag rescue.

"But, Weasie dear," cooed Grace, "what did it feel like to jump? Just tell us that and then we'll let you off."

Louise smiled wanly. Was it possible that any other question could be invented?

"It didn't exactly feel," she replied to Grace, "but I knew I had to do it. I had been watching the little speck of a boat as it took the rollers from the side, and I knew the next would toss it over. Then I saw Kitty—and I didn't think of the distance after that.

"You looked about as big as a fish hawk diving for his dinner," remarked Cleo, "and you

nipped Kitty just as neatly as a hawk pecks his fish."

"I felt just like that—it is birdlike to dive from such a distance," Louise said, "and cutting through the air, free of everything—is—is wonderful."

"Even with the ocean as a backstop?" asked Helen shivering.

"Nice and soft," Louise said reflectively.

"But however did you hold on to Kitty, and cling to the canoe?" persisted Grace, in spite of the promise to cease questioning.

"I don't know. It was black for awhile, and I just struggled to keep up, and to keep Kitty up. She was too scared to help herself, and she had swallowed a lot of water. I guess I managed to cling to the canoe—Girls, you don't know what you can do until you have to," she finished.

It was still early, but the visit to Kitty at the hospital had to be made early, according to promise. Louise and Margaret were to go, and the other scouts, especially Julia and Grace, were going in the car as far as the village, to be picked up there by the girl's car on the way back.

They found the patient dressed, and being forcibly detained, as the nurse put it. In fact, Kitty had been dressed since day break, and nothing short of force did detain her.

"Good thing you come now," she greeted

Margaret. "Oh, there's my life-saver. Hello, McGinty, how's the water to-day? I don't want to test it though," she shook her cropped head, and the girls noticed how much better that hair looked since its salt water shampoo.

"Don't hurry so, Kitty. You have plenty of time. Uncle Pete said he would be over at the landing at ten o'clock, and it's only nine now." Louise told her.

"No matter what time," she retorted, "it's next year to me. This place is haunted sure. I was fishin' with ghosts all night."

"That was your bromide," Margaret assured her. "You were so excited and hysterical you simply had to be quieted down. Do you feel all right?"

"Don't know as I feel at all," Kitty answered, jerking herself up to make sure she had not grown fins. "I never want to read that Jonah story again. But I knew it! I knew it!" and she chewed her lips in repressed bitterness.

"Knew what?" Louise asked.

"That the old monster ocean would try to swallow me," she replied. "Didn't I tell you I would never go on that water after what it done to me? But I did want to see that wig waggin' and I went out because——"

She stopped, and the sharp little black eyes were glistening.

"I know, Kitty. You wanted to see us beat

the boys, didn't you?" asked Louise. "Well, we did it, and maybe if you hadn't—got spilled, I couldn't have won on the signalling. You see, the life boat was out there watching, and they caught my message, and just shot in—lucky for you and me."

"If I knowed Captain Dave's men were out there, I wouldn't have been so scared to death," Kitty said. "But anyhow, I'm goin' home," and she made for the door. "Good-by, nurse, you've been real good to me. I like your cookin' first rate, and I'll fetch you the first mess of clams I dig," she offered.

The nurse was amused and interested. Kitty had given her a new line on patients. From the time her wet clothes had been taken from her, Kitty had threatened to go out on the fire escape in the hospital robe, if they were not returned very early in the morning, and nurse knew very well, she intended to carry out the threat.

There was no bag or luggage to leave with Kitty, neither did she dally in her exit. Rather, she was in the car and waiting, before Margaret and Louise could possibly get down the stairs and reach the sidewalk.

"I love automobiles," said Kitty, as they climbed in, and Leonore touched the starter.

"Wish you would take a longer ride," Margaret remarked. "It would do you good."

"Can't, wish I could," the girl replied a bit

wistfully. "Don't know what's happened since I've been away. Hope Bentley was there." Margaret then noticed an anxiety that seemed to make a woman out of the winsome child.

"You're not worrying about Uncle Pete?" asked Louise. "The girl said he was all right last evening."

"Oh no, it isn't Uncle Pete I'm worrying about," replied Kitty. But she did not attempt to explain further, and the girls noticed the omission.

Turning carefully into the little sand road that led to the landing, Leonore slowed down. A boy just stepped from the pavilion.

"Oh, there's Bentley!" shouted Kitty. "Hello, Ben!" she called waving frantically. No wonder she was so delighted, thought her companions. It was almost like coming back from the grave.

"Hello, Kitty," replied Bentley quickly as he could make out the figure in the back seat of the car. His face showed his pleasure. For Kitty to have been snatched from the waves, and then spend the night in the hospital, was really an occurrence.

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," she rattled on. The "waits" were addressed one to Bentley and the other to Leonore. "I'm going over with Ben. Got your boat?"

"Yes, come on," called the boy, plainly glad

to be of service to the heroine. "Uncle Pete is at the bend. I'll row you down to him."

"Hello, Bentley," Louise called out. "Haven't we had a great time?"

"I should say you had," he answered, cap in hand. "You're the life saver, aren't you?"

"She's *it*," sang out Margaret gleefully.

"Oh, say, girls" (now Bentley's bashfulness was threatening him), "did any of you lose a bag?"

For a moment neither Margaret nor Louise remembered Elizabeth's lost bag with the shoes and stockings on the beach. Then it flashed on Margaret——

"Oh, yes with some other things," she stammered. "You know, Louise, Elizabeth left her bag with the things on the beach, moonlight bathing night——"

"Yes, that's so," said Louise. "Why, Bentley? Did you find a bag?"

"No, but I saw one in a shop, and I thought it might belong to some one of you girls. What sort did you lose?"

Neither girl knew much about the lost bag, but Louise thought it might be a blue crochet.

"Yes, that's it," said Bentley. "It has a tassel on it and it's blue. I'll get it for you next time I go over to Jake's," he offered.

"Is it at Jake's?" exclaimed Kitty. "That's where I saw the dandy pumps with buckles on, and the swellest silk stockings. Louise, I'll get

the bag for you, because I'm going over to Jake's to buy some of those things!"

"Oh," exclaimed Louise, in a gale of laughter. "Those are our pumps and stockings. They were taken off from the beach."

"You don't say?" and Kitty's tone allayed any possible suspicion. "That's just like Jake. Buys everything the boys offer, and no questions asked, just like they say in the papers. I tell you, I'll come around when I can," this rather dubiously, "and I'll get you girls, and we'll go and raid Jake. It'll do him good."

When she raced off with Bentley and Leonore turned toward the village the scouts were still shaking with laughter.

"We are to raid Jake's. Remember that," said Margaret.

"But we will surely have to make a contribution to Kitty," said Louise. "She has had her eye on your buckles, Maggie."

"Why didn't you see the patient all the way home?" asked Leonore, when they stopped for the other girls at the Post Office.

"Oh, why didn't we?" reiterated Louise. "Leonore, she lives on forbidden ground. We have had a glimpse of it and hope for more, but we have to bide-a-wee, don't we, Margaret? Get me a quart of those peaches," she called out to Cleo, who seemed spellbound before a fruit stand.

"And I want new apples," ordered Mar-

garet. "Don't take any old cold storage stuff. I want new ones, if they do pizen me," she declared.

"How folks stare," whispered Louise. "I'll have to leave off this handy little uniform for a while."

"Not at all," protested Margaret. "We want folks to know who we are. I feel like giving the cheer this very minute."

But the return of the marketers forestalled any such danger. Apples and peaches, and even a big melon, were piled in the car by the boy from the Italian fruit stand, and then Cleo insisted on every one having a soda before going back to Ocean Avenue.

The drug store, where the best soda was served, filled many other civic needs than those of supplying sundaes and prescriptions. It also served as a town information bureau, and just now, while the girls were waiting for their order, a very pompous woman in the spickest, spannest white duck outfit, was asking questions from the prescription clerk.

The girls heard him mention "the Point" and at this they stopped talking to "listen in."

"But I must get my messages as quickly as they are received," said the white duck woman. "It is of the utmost importance."

"Wireless messages have to be relayed," explained the man, "and besides that, we can't

always get a boat over to the place." His voice was vindictive.

"All right, but please be more careful," said the woman. "It is not a matter of money, you know."

"We only have one kind of charge," fired back the clerk rather angrily. "Our boys are paid for their time, and that's all we ask." He turned away to answer the telephone, and the haughty creature left the drug store. As she did she made no excuse for an impertinent survey of the girls, sipping their sodas.

"Know us the next time," said Cleo.

"Surely will," added Louise.

"And getting wireless messages for Luna Land! Now I'm all excited," and Margaret tried to make use of two drug store fans, one in each hand.

"It is flabbergasting," gulped Louise, finishing her soda. "That white duck reminds me of something."

"Of Kitty's nurse," Margaret exclaimed. "I think though, the wireless one has a crackle the hospital brand lacks. Kitty's nurse was quite noiseless."

"That one wasn't, though," declared Julia. "She had enough starch in that outfit to defy even the Sea Crest dampness. Perhaps that was the real idea. Come on, scouts. Do you recall Neal is to take us out in his new launch?"

"And did you hear he is going to call it the Treddie, after us?" added Grace.

"Yes, wanted to make it True Tred, but we told him that was copyrighted," explained Julia.

"Shall we dare ask for a trip to the Point?" inquired Helen. "That was the plan you know; first trip in the new launch."

"We'll see. But come on, do. Leonore, you are a dear, to take us all about, and listen to our prattle," Cleo told the capable driver who had long since finished her soda, and was waiting patiently for the younger girls.

"I like it," she replied with evident sincerity.

"You shall have a box of sunburn cream for that," sang out Louise. "What is your brand? Or would you rather have a talcum?"

Selecting from the bewildering display at the counter of summer toilet articles consumed still more time, until finally, realization that it was really lunch time, the fire bell announcing it, brought them all up sharply.

"Wish we had our slippers and pumps back," said Grace. "These emergency sneaks certainly look the part. When did Kitty say we were to raid Jake's?"

"No definite time was set, as they say about delayed scout meetings," replied Margaret, "but I could use my pretty buckled pumps this very afternoon."

"Wait a minute," Helen called to a news boy.

"We want a paper!" They always seemed to want something when in town.

"Look! Look!" exclaimed Margaret, securing the sheet while some one else paid the boy. "We are all over the front page. Louise Hart, we will have to appoint a body guard for you, or the people will kidnap you. Just read this!"

"Oh, just listen," insisted Cleo. "It says the Sea Crest Life Savers are going to ask the naval authorities to acknowledge the brave act——"

But Louise had fallen back in a mock faint—
The glory of the aftermath was getting a bit too thick for comfort.

CHAPTER XX

A REVELATION

ANYWHERE you like, and the bottom, not the sky, is the limit." It was Neal, replying to the girls' request for a trip to the Point in the Treddie.

The party included Grace, Louise, Julia, Helen, Cleo, Isabel, Elizabeth and Corinne, the last named having run up from the Windward, to spend a few days with her school companions at Sea Crest.

"A regular excursion," said Elizabeth. "We should have brought eats."

"We may find them," suggested Neal, turning over his engine, whereat the Treddie chugged off.

"This may look like an excursion, girls," said Cleo, "but it feels like an expedition. I'm quivering with excitement.

"And I'm all goose flesh with apprehension," followed Louise. "How do we know what we are going to run into on Looney Land?"

"We don't. There would be no fun in it if we did," Grace told her. "I've come armed-

If bears or lions howl at me they'll get ammonia from my tree," she rhymed, exhibiting Benny's water pistol.

"Spoof," Corinne exclaimed; "I thought we had wild terrors up at Windward, but we haven't come across bears nor injuns. Wish I had brought my illegal sling shot that I only use in self defense."

"Treddie can tread," remarked Isabel. "Who was it walked on the water?"

"Ancient or modern?" flipped Louise. "I'm busy thinking of walking on air just now."

"Which way do you want to go first?" asked Neal, turning a little from his steering wheel.

"To the Point," called Cleo.

"Thought we were sure, positive, no mistake, going to Looney Land this time," grumbled Julia.

"So we are but we will stop off at the Point, and feel the lay of the land first. We may get a line on the wild animals, you know."

"I like motor boating even better than sail boating, and I thought the Blowell was perfect." This was Cleo's comment on the Treddie's trip, as the launch skimmed over the river and bay, rejoicing in every wave presented to her bow.

"We won't get stuck on a sand bar, at any rate," reflected Louise. "This boat has power enough to push itself off."

"But we could get engine troubles," Neal warned. "Although I don't anticipate any such

disaster. Which one of you girls lives in the Gordon house?" he asked presently.

"I do," said Grace. "Don't tell me they are coming back for anything?"

"No, not just that," replied Neal; "but Dick Gordon is my chum. He has been out with a yachting party all summer, the Altons of New York, you know, and I had a line from his last port. He will be back in about a week. I'm awfully anxious to see him. We have great times always, but he got in service, through the Canadian lines, and I got—left, so I haven't seen Dick since."

"They took very young boys in the Canadian service just before the armistice I know," said Cleo, "for my seventeen-year-old brother ran over there, and got the 'wings' the day before Peace Day."

"Yes, that is how Dick made it," explained Neal. "But now he's getting back, a little late but mighty welcome."

"I suppose he will want a look at his old room," said Grace. "It is just as he left it, I believe."

"Yes, Dick has a hobby for sea stuff, and his marine room was his pride. But he won't bother you folks any; he isn't that sort," said Neal.

"Now Grazie," teased Elizabeth, "look out for your window."

"Rather I'll leave a love note on the sill, like

the lady-faire of old," retorted Grace. "At any rate he is apt to call on me."

"Here we are at the Point," called out Julia. "Don't fall overboard in landing."

"If you want to go in at the island, after you have looked around here, there is a perfect stone arch at the other end. I'll take you over that way, if you like. It's one of the prettiest spots around here," suggested Neal.

"Oh, yes, that will be splendid," Louise answered. "We have seen the island from two sides, and that must be at the extreme other end."

There was no visible apprehension expressed in the way the girls landed at the point, and if they experienced such emotion, it was thoroughly disguised, for as a troop they simply besieged the strip of land, with one grand, vigorous yell.

No Tenderfoots seemed included, but rather seasoned woodsmen; eager to climb, to beat down trails, "to confront the enemy" with open or closed fists—such daring indeed was manifested in their act of possession.

"I'm so glad we came in at this end," said Cleo. "With all that shouting the little woman at the ice cream stand might take fright and go. Then what would we do for eats?"

"Oh, there comes the carrier pigeon!" explained Grace. "Come on to the birches. See,

he is going to land in there, same as he did before."

"Yes, that's Lovey," declared Cleo. "I'm so glad all the girls will have a chance to see him. Hurry, and don't make too much noise."

The graceful little gray dove was floating through the air, without a flutter of wing—just sailing on the breeze. Following Cleo's lead the girls made their way through the thicket, and presently were in the low, soft, velvety patch, the sort of maiden-hair grass that grows under the trees.

"Here we are," almost whispered Isabel, for the bird was about settled on a tuft of meadow grass.

"Oh, here's Kitty!" exclaimed Grace. "Kitty girl, what are you hiding from?"

And there, crouched at the foot of a tree was Kitty. She looked like nothing so much as a toad-stool, a bit of human fungus growth, at the foot of that gentle birch tree. Her knees drawn up, and bare feet hiding in her bedraggled gingham skirt, Kitty was truly a sorry looking figure.

"What is it?" asked Isabel. The girls had grouped themselves around in semi-circle, and even Lovey, the waiting messenger, was for the moment forgotten.

Kitty raised her head and confessed to a pair of very red eyes. Her lips were trembling and the little cords of her face twitching.

"I heard a racket, and thought she had sent them after me," stammered Kitty. "But it was only you," and just the glint of a smile played through her grief.

"Who was coming after you? Whom did you fear, Kitty? Tell us?" asked Louise, slipping down on the green, beside the crouching figure.

"Aunt Hannah. She came back from New York, and we didn't expect her. Somehow she found out about—about the accident, and she was furious."

"Your Aunt Hannah?" pressed Grace. The girls sensed tragedy now.

"Says she is, but she ain't, I'm going to ask Captain Dave for my papers and prove it." Kitty was recovering her courage, perhaps at the thought of battle.

Louise longed to throw her arms about the child and tell her that her precious papers were that very moment in the Hart family safe, but she knew the time had not come for the revelation.

"And she said she'd send them after me," moaned Kitty. "So I'm goin' to run away."

"Send whom after you?" followed Corinne.

"The reform school people, and I would be put behind bars for life." The sharp dark eyes gleamed until it seemed sparks would fly, but they were glints of pure terror, the girl was panic-stricken.

“Just don’t you worry, Kitty. We’ll stand by you, and you shall never be put in such a place,” Julia assured her. “Have you forgotten Captain Dave?”

“No, but she is so much smarter than any one else. And I can’t get off this Point without she sees me, and then she might send the police after me.”

That the fearful threat had been held over poor Kitty’s head was now easily guessed—perhaps this was why she had been so secretive about Luna Land?

“I’ll run down to the dock and tell Neal to sail around the bay for a half hour,” suggested Cleo. “Then, we can sit right down and talk things over with Kitty.”

“And here is Lovey with a letter from Bentley,” said Kitty, now turning to the pigeon that had been hopping about, and picking at invisible bugs. “Whatever would I have done without Bentley. Come, Lovey!”

Tame as a kitten the pigeon strutted up to Kitty’s hand. She fondled it, gave it some crumbs from her pocket, then, from under the gray and white wing took the tiny quill that held the message.

Cleo had returned, and the girls looked on in wonder, while Kitty unrolled the little slip, and deciphered the message.

“Yes, she’s over there yet, Bentley says.

And Royal is crying for me." At this she threw up the tousled head and glared defiance.

"I'm going right back," she cried. "She shan't scare me off now. That's just what she wants to do. She wants to steal Royal away, but she shan't, she shan't!" and only a hold on Kitty's arm, made as the girls realized she was running off, held her for another moment.

"Who is Royal?" demanded Cleo. "Tell us! We must know."

"I can't tell you. I'm pledged not to, and don't you think I have to keep a pledge? Do I?" This last was almost an appeal.

"If it is a good pledge," answered Louise quickly.

"I don't know whether it is good or bad," said Kitty freeing herself, "but I know I must get to Royal."

"Can't we go with you?" asked Grace. "We are not afraid of any old Aunt Hannahs."

"Oh, no, no, please, not yet. That would be so much worse. I have to be so tricky to save Royal, and if she suspected me I would lose everything. Not that I care for her old hundred dollars now. I wouldn't even take it," she declared.

The girls were puzzled. Royal, it appeared, must be some child that Kitty was protecting, and this woman was holding a threatening club over Kitty's head.

"Are you positive we can't come right over

there and fight things out for you, Kitty?" asked Grace with a brave voice. "We have been waiting around here all summer for that sort of thing."

"No, no," wailed the child, now running toward the little skiff which lay under the willow at the water's edge. "I'll call you if I get in trouble. See that high rock over on the far side of the island? Well, you can see that all the way from Sea Crest, and if you see a lantern hanging in that tree to-night, come. If it's daytime I'll put a white flag up, and the wind will wave it, but I don't believe she'll make trouble just now. All I was afraid of was being put away, and now I see why she said that. She just wanted me to run away. But I shan't. I'll stay, and I'll take care of little Royal."

She was gone. Her oars lapped the waves and sent back their brave message as she turned into the cove that faced Luna Land.

"Well, of all things!" exclaimed Cleo.

"I expected you to say something a little more original," remarked Grace. "But I don't quite blame you. It is bewildering."

"And Royal!" repeated Helen. "Royal made our signs and played with the little tools!"

"And signed his name Peter Pan," recalled Louise.

"Why should Kitty be watching a child with such a swell name?" queried Julia.

"Why all the other things?" replied Elizabeth.

"There's Neal's toot. We must go," announced Isabel.

"I wish we could circle around the island," suggested Cleo. No harm in that, surely. Every one goes as they please on the bay."

"Grand idea!" exclaimed Helen. "Maybe we could see into the island from the boat. Come on. Hope Neal has some more time to spare."

The owner of the Treddie was glad to circle the little isle, and when all had jumped in the launch, the trip home began with that preliminary dash.

"I'll slow down so you can get a good look," Neal told them, and he understood enough about the interest in Luna Land to do his part.

All eyes were strained toward the shore.

"There's the pretty, rocky ledge Neal told us about," remarked Isabel. "Just see! It's like a movie rock. What a pretty arch it forms."

But even the natural beauty of the rocky alcove did not furnish the point of interest they searched for.

"Would you imagine that place hid human life?" said Cleo, a little disappointed. "Not even a tree branch moves."

"Dense foliage," added Grace. "It would be pretty hard to see anything through those trees."

The launch was covering the last strip of water that lapped the island. Every one seemed tense with an anxious sort of interest.

Suddenly Helen jumped up.

"Look," she called. "Over by the arch!"

"The white duck lady!" cried Cleo. "See, she is looking at us through glasses."

"Sit down Helen," ordered Grace. "Don't pretend we are interested, or she will know this launch."

They were not far from the shore, and it was easy to discern the figure on the rock, who evidently used the glasses to make sure of the faces in the launch.

"Maybe she's looking for her wireless," said Isabel.

"Well, I am doubly sorry for Kitty if that's Aunt Hannah," declared Julia, and then the Treddie left Luna Land behind.

CHAPTER XXI

ON LUNA LAND

GRACE tapped at the side window of the Log Cabin; she had climbed over the little stile-steps that mounted the fence between Rosabell and Cleo's cottage, and now she waited at the window for a sign of life within, for it was early, and summer folks could sleep late. Her round dimpled face was pressed to the pane with a rather serious look, and any one might know to see her, that Grace was troubled.

Cleo answered the call, throwing open the latticed window, and almost kissing Grace in the act.

"Come in, Grazia. Why so early? Looking for the story book worm?" Cleo greeted.

"I'm glad you are not out—on the lake I mean," answered Grace. "I'll come around to the side porch, Cleo, I must talk with you."

On the big swing made of interlaced white birchwood, the two chums perched, and Grace promptly undertook to unburden her mind.

"Cleo dear," she said, "I am so worried

about Kitty. How do we know but that woman may have locked her up, or something?"

"Strange, Grazia, I have been thinking just that myself. But how are we to find out without jeopardizing Kitty's interests? She begged us not to go over there."

"I know, Cleo, but I have a plan. You and I can go to the Point. We will ask Tommie Johnston to row us over. He would not be busy so early, and a row boat doesn't make any noise. Then, we can go over to the island, and just feel our way around."

"Splendid," agreed Cleo. "I'll be ready in a jiffy. Are you ready?"

"Just have to tell Benny I'm going up the river," replied Grace. "We can easily be back in an hour."

Tommie Johnston could go, and was glad to give the girls a sail in his freshly-painted boat, but he wagged his head seriously when Cleo said she had a message for Kitty, and was going to take it straight over to the island.

"Miss Morehouse is over there," he said in warning, "I saw her sailin' around in her hospital clothes yesterday."

"We don't mind. Is she Aunt Hannah?" Cleo asked.

"Yes, that's the dame. Miss Hannah Morehouse, boss of Luney Land," replied Tommie, "and you've got a lot of nerve to trespass on her territory. She's mighty strict."

"We are going to try it," insisted Grace, whereat Tommie pulled harder than ever on his oars.

They stopped at the Point but everything was quiet there, if the wildest chirping of birds, and fluttering of all feathered creatures be overlooked. Before the human world moves birds seem happiest, and surely wildest, so that on the dewy summer morning, Grace and Cleo stepped onto the Point and into a perfect medley of bird language.

"No one around here," commented Cleo. "Don't let us waste time."

They hurried back to Tommie's boat, just in time to see a launch cut by. In it was the white duck woman, Miss Hannah Morehouse.

"There she goes," said Tommie, with a broad and noisy grin. "You're in luck."

"And we are glad of it," admitted Cleo, popping into the boat.

"Which side shall we land at?" asked the boat man, as they brushed the sandy shore.

"We don't know," answered Cleo. "Which way do you think is best? We would like to get on a quiet end, not near the cottages, if there are any?" said Grace.

"Don't know much about it," said Tommie. "But I guess the far end is best—over by the Cave of the Winds," he finished, pointing his boat toward the rocky arch on the far side of the little island.

The two scouts stepped cautiously ashore. That end of the island was banked with huge rocks that shot up almost straight, forming a natural fort, with the rugged, artistic arch at its base. Under the arch Grace and Cleo felt their way, and their attention was almost immediately arrested by a series of the pasteboard cards, signed "Peter Pan,"

"Little Royal's work," said Grace quietly. "Wonder if we shall see him?"

Up from the rocks a sparkling little stream played. It's origin was a spring under a hill, and as it trickled along, in the tender growth of green, the girls felt instinctively the beauty of the little spot so hidden and isolated from the inhabitants of Sea Crest.

"Lovely!" breathed Cleo. "Little Royal could hardly be lonely here."

"Oh, yes, he could," contradicted Grace. "A child wants more than scenery to play with."

They had gone but a short distance in the woods when something was heard threshing through the bushes.

"It's he," said Cleo, and she secretly hoped no armed caretaker might appear with the child.

A sudden swish, then from under a tangled elderberry bush there emerged a darling little boy. At the sight of the intruders he stood stock still in evident amazement.

"Oh, I knew you would come!" he exclaimed, clapping his little hands in glee. "I knew my

letters would reach you! What are your names, fairies? Please tell me, and are we going right now to Mama?"

"How do you do, little boy," said Cleo. "Are you Royal?"

"Yes, I'm Royal, and I know who you are. I've been expecting you a very long time."

He came forward a little hesitatingly. Grace could not resist rushing up to him and throwing her arms about the pretty child.

"Oh, you perfectly darling little boy," she exclaimed. "We know who you are, for Kitty has told us," and she hugged him quite indecorously for a fairy.

He was so pretty. His light hair cropped at his ears did not succeed in preventing curls to tangle and his blue eyes were roguish as even a baby boy's should be. With these unerring features his color reflected the outdoor treatment, and his little form evinced unmistakably that quality for which we have no better term than "good breeding."

Cleo stooped to pay her homage, and when Grace released Royal she caught him up.

"Why do you want to go to mama?" she asked. "Where is mama?"

"Oh, far away, and she cannot get back till the Royal comes in. Her boat is Royal too," he said proudly.

"And who takes care of you?" pressed Grace,

keeping in mind the prospect of almost any interruptions spoiling this valued confidence.

"Kitty-dear does. There is Hanorah, of course, but I don't like her, and I do like Kitty-dear," he said, with a brave echo in his childish voice.

"And where do you live? Where is your house?" Cleo was peering through the trees, but could see no sign of anything like a dwelling.

"Oh, I haven't any house; I must live outdoors. Dr. Grant ordered it, and I must roll in the mud. But I get tired rolling, and there isn't any real mud here, except what Kitty-dear fetches in the boat. Then we make mud pies, and that's fun. But you are going to take me for a boat ride now, aren't you? I have wanted one for such a long time." His voice was wistful, and his blue eyes were fastened on the boat, that through the trees could be seen, rocking on the water's edge, where Tommie waited.

"Where is Kitty?" asked Cleo without answering the appeal for a long delayed boat ride.

"She's busy with Uncle Pete," replied Royal. "Hannah wants lots of things done when she comes, but sometimes she gives Kitty-dear money, then we have cookies, but we never dare tell Hannah, 'cause I'm not allowed cookies," he said with a cute twist of his yellow head. "But you are the fairies who took my letters, aren't you? I knew when they were gone from

their letter boxes on the birch trees, that I would surely get an answer! And see, I was right!"

"I think I hear Kitty coming," said Grace. "Yes, here she is."

"Well, I never," called Kitty gleefully. "Look who blew in!"

"Hello, Kitty," called back Cleo, delighted to notice the high spirits Kitty flaunted. "We just did blow in from the bay to make a very early call. Hope we haven't interrupted any gardening?" This applied to Kitty's outfit, for she wore blue overalls, and a boy's cap, that looked better on her cropped head than could any other sort of hat, and her bare feet completed a really charming rustic picture.

"Gardening, you said it!" exclaimed Kitty in pardonable slang. "That's what I have to do when 'her nibs' is in town. But thank goodness she's out for the day, and may have to run up to the city" (this in a mocking tone). "I hope she does, and I hope she gets tripped up in the run so she can't get back for a while. What do you think of my little Royal? I call him little Boy Blue, and he calls me Bo Peep, don't we have good times, Roy?"

In answer the small boy rubbed his head against Kitty's overalls, like a fond little kitten.

"We felt we must see you, Kitty," said Cleo seriously, "and we'll have to talk fast, as we left home so early and have to get back. Tommie

is in the boat, and he too, must get back to the landing. Kitty, are you all right? and is everything all right?"

"Pretty much," said Kitty with a little wink in Royal's direction. "I'm glad you came and would—you—like to see our lodgings?"

"I'm afraid we can't wait this time," said Grace thinking it would be like Brother Benny to raise a still alarm that Grace had gone to that Looney Land. "But we can come back again soon."

"You are going to take me with you," gleefully announced the boy making a start toward the rocky arch.

"Oh, Roy dear, you wouldn't leave Kitty," protested the little caretaker. "You know we are both going together——"

"But these are my fairies," and tears welled into the saucer blue eyes. "I can't—can't let them go away!" Two monster tears rolled right into the quivering lips.

Cleo and Grace felt very helpless in this sort of predicament. It was one thing to dive off piers, and fish boys or girls out of the depths, but how to bank a flood of baby tears?

Kitty knew. She took Royal in her arms and attempted to hoist him up a tree.

"Peter Pan," she said severely. "See that cloud floating by! That's our airship, and very, very soon I promise we shall go to mother's land—in our ship of love. You see, these are

the messenger fairies (she did not know what truth she spoke,) and they will soon return," she finished grandly.

Grace and Cleo felt impelled to be fairies, and each raised fluttering arms, saved from comic effect by the love they betrayed in their smiling assent.

"Yes, we surely will come back very soon," declared Grace. "And Little Peter Pan, you may watch us from your tree. We have a power boat—and a row boat—you can tell us by a signal. When we come we will wave a blue flag—a light blue one, like a piece of the sky," finished Grace.

"All right," said the child, a little dolefully. "But I sat in the tree so often in my nighty, and Kitty-dear built steps so I could go up and down——" He paused, and bravely brushed away another big tear, with a motion that indicated dislike for feeble symbols.

"We'll hurry," said Cleo, seizing the chance of escape. "Good-bye little Royal-Boy-Blue-Peter Pan," she said merrily. "And good-bye, Kitty. Send a letter by Lovey dove, or by Bentley, and we will answer promptly."

Kitty understood, and as they turned for a last look before stepping into Tommie's boat, they saw her holding Royal, as high on her shoulder as she could prop him; and he was wildly waving Kitty's blue cap.

CHAPTER XXII

A COMEDY OF THE ROCKS

O H, I am so excited, Cleo. Everything is happening at once. The girls have been down to Captain Dave's and he was delighted with his pipe and things, and Neal seized the loving cup. Says it belongs to his club, the one Dick Gordon was in. And——" she paused for breath, Cleo jumped in the opening.

"Grazia, dear, don't choke. I am all of a flutter myself. Louise has had her father look over Kitty's papers, and it is almost too commonplace to tell, but it is just perfectly lovely, all the same. The name "Schulkill" is on the deed to the property over at Luna Land, and the name Morehouse, that's the Aunt Hannah and Uncle Pete name, is only told of in Kitty's mother's letters. It will be very easy to establish Kitty's claim, Mr. Hart thinks, and Louise is so full of the news she wants to fly back to the island to tell Kitty without waiting for the message."

"I don't blame her. We hoped there would be one important paper in that packet, there al-

ways is, else why all the tin box care? But isn't it strange a man like benevolent old Captain Dave never suspected such a thing? Men just seem to think women carry tin boxes out of shipwrecks to take care of hair pins, and little things like that."

"I told the girls to wear their uniforms and Neal promised to take us all over this afternoon," Cleo continued. "Oh, Grace, I never quite expected so much excitement, but I must admit I love it," said the courageous scout.

How the True Treds congregated, ready for the sail over the bay in the valiant Teddie need not be told, for the very next noticeable thing was they were all together, and ready for a start, piling into the launch, like an encore to their previous excursion. Everybody chatted, and chinned, and giggled, and asked questions; and the sky blue flag Grace carried folded in her blouse caused no end of comment.

"Louise has had a double share of glory," said Helen, adding more to the share in her own tone of admiration. "She made a rescue, and found Kitty's deed to Luna Land."

"But the curtain is not rung down yet," Cleo reminded her. "No telling what may happen this very afternoon."

The boat clipped the waves so merrily the Point loomed in view almost before the girls realized they had entered the cove.

"There's Bentley!" called Grace. "See, he

is just standing on the dock, and he has a suitcase. Turn in there a minute, Neal, please. We would speak to him."

Quickly as he spied the Treddie, Bentley waved his cap in signal for them to come in.

"There," added Cleo; "he has a message, I think. See, he has a paper in his hand."

"Don't get out," the boy called. "I'll throw it in," and wrapping a piece of paper weighted with a pebble, around the smaller slip, he easily tossed the message into Julia's lap.

"It's addressed to the scouts," said Louise. "You read it, Cleo."

The engine had not been turned off, so that it readily picked up speed again, as the girls waved gayly to Bentley. Cleo smoothed out the little note anxiously, and every one saw it was written on the old-time yellow paper. Cleo read aloud:

"Bentley is going home and I won't stay here any longer. Watch for my wig-wag signal from the stone arch, and come to rescue me and Royal. Must watch for chance. About three, maybe." It was signed "Kitty."

"Another wig-wag rescue," repeated Helen, fluttering with excitement. "Won't it be splendid to take them both away?"

"But what shall we do with them?" asked Isabel. "I know one doesn't dare take even a lost child indoors without danger of arrest."

"Then we'll keep them on the porch," replied Cleo crisply.

"And we can notify Captain Dave or even our police officer. Then there will be no possibility of complications," said Louise.

Another swing around the tail of the point, and Luna Land lay before them. All eyes were strained toward the rocky summit over the arch.

"I see her!" shouted Julia. "Remember I saw her first," and she stood to wave her camp hat in one hand and a handkerchief in the other.

"Yes," added Grace, throwing the blue cheesecloth to the breeze, "there they are!" Kitty was waving her white flag against the green foliage background. "Oh, Neal go in quickly. Some one may catch them before we can reach them."

Not another word was spoken until the launch scraped the rocks.

"Stay where you are!" called Kitty. "We have to jump."

"Why? They may be hurt," protested Elizabeth. But her companions had realized the situation. Kitty wanted to reach the launch from the secluded corner of the rock, and would not risk embarking from the natural landing, with its view all open.

"Can we take the canvas?" Isabel asked Neal. A nod of his head gave permission, and before he seemed to know just what they were going to do, four of the girls had leapt to land.

Cleo and Helen then tossed the bundled piece of awning over the side of the Treddie, and safely ashore, then climbed out themselves, and, like the firemen under burning buildings, stood the True Treds, with that big piece of canvas stretched under the leafy peak of the rocky archway.

"Ready!" called out Kitty.

A firmer grasp was made at every holding point, and then—a gentle thud.

Little Royal bounced like a circus baby in the life net.

Quickly two girls lifted him out and turned down to the launch, while the others held the net for Kitty, who came in with a jump that brought the rescuers to their knees, stifling a gale of laughter.

"All right—no bones broken," gasped Kitty. "Hurry, they may be after us!"

Quickly they all scrambled in the launch, while little Royal was in Neal's arms.

"I knew it, I knew it," he kept repeating. "And this is just like daddy's little boat——"

"Girls!" exclaimed Kitty, "I found your slippers and stockings and the bag among Aunt Hannah's things. They're in my bag."

"Where is she?" Cleo asked, too impatient to wait for a more opportune moment.

"She came back ready to take Roy away," Kitty said defiantly. "But I wouldn't trust her. I found a lot of papers and wireless mes-

sages, and I wouldn't let her sneak off with Royal. I just made up my mind she couldn't scare me any more, and I'd go to Uncle Dave's, and tell him all about it."

"You are right," declared Louise. "I don't know very much about it, but it can do no harm for this little darling to leave that island. He was a regular prisoner there."

"You said it!" replied Kitty. "And having the poor angel roll in the mud to get strong! Then sleeping in a hut to be outdoors, when I know positive, his folks paid her thousands of dollars to keep their child in a delightful high-class retreat—where everything was perfect, but very costly."

"Oh, was that it?" asked Grace, looking at little Royal, as he helped steer the boat.

"Yes, and more," insisted Kitty, her cheeks flaming with excitement. "She promised me a hundred dollars if I would keep every one off the island and look out for Roy. I thought it was a lot, but what about her thousands? Then, when I got in the accident the other day, and she was afraid folks might come here to see if I had pneumonia, she changed her mind, and refused to give me any money. Now she is back, and I know Royal's folks will soon be in New York and I just wouldn't trust her with him any more. That's why I had to ask you to rescue us. And you did!"

In spite of her excitement she could laugh,

and the humor presently became an acute infection for every one was shouting at the comedy of the rocks. And Kitty looked so funny. She was dressed up, had shoes and stockings on, and a "warmed over" hat, with pathetically drooping roses around it; and then the bag, with the long, lost slippers!

"Come to my house first," insisted Grace. "I'm nearest."

"I am to meet my friend this afternoon," said Neal, who was so busy with the boy and his engine he had never even heard the child's name mentioned. "He got in this morning after a stormy trip," went on the young man, "but his yacht, the Royal, made it all right, and Dick promised to be down late this afternoon."

"The Royal!" gasped Kitty, Grace and Louise.

"That's my yacht," sang out the boy gleefully. "Daddy and Mother and Ricky are coming home on the Royal!"

"Oh joy!" shouted Louise, while Kitty gasped.

"Do you mean to say the young man who runs the yacht is coming to see you?" She had seized Neal's shoulders as if to confront him with some horrible crime.

"Careful," he said with a laugh. "You'll steer us against the dock. Yes, Richard Gordon who runs the Alton's yacht, Royal, is my

friend," he answered, beginning to sense the true meaning of the affair.

Five minutes later it was a queer little procession that wended the short way from the landing to Rosabell cottage.

"I would like you to have seen the old dump," said Kitty, referring to Luna Land, "but I'll never go back there while Hannah is around. It's only a couple of shacks. Nothing to see but Bentley's camp. You see," in answer to the unspoken inquiry, "Bentley is an awful smart boy, who had to be taken out of school. He has a nice, good-natured big brother, Roger, who came down here, rented land from Uncle Pete, and pitched a couple of tents on Luna Land. They were on the other side of the island, but Ben had the carrier pigeons and we made up all kinds of outdoor games and he let me use all the yellow paper I wanted. He's gone back home, all well and ready for High School." This last sentence seemed to evoke a sigh from Kitty.

"That was why he had his book always with him," said Cleo, and they turned the corner to Rosabell.

CHAPTER XXIII

SCOUTS EVERY ONE

WE have company," said Grace, noticing rather resentfully, that a strange figure occupied a corner of her porch. "And it's a man!"

They were almost up to the steps. Evidently Mrs. Philow was very much interested with her guest, for she could be seen gesticulating earnestly.

The girls quickened their steps and as they approached the figure turned, caught sight of the party of scouts, and stood with his cap in hand.

"It's Ricky!" cried Royal, breaking away from Kitty's hold and running to the young man, who now stared in undisguised amazement.

"Royal!" he called in answer. "As I live, our own little Royal!"

"Well," gasped Neal, attempting to get his greeting in. "Isn't this rather a surprise?"

"I should say so," answered his friend. "However did our bonny boy turn up here? I have burned out my wireless trying to get a

word about him. Mrs. Alton is almost ill again worrying. Where have you been?" He was looking over the child with a familiar and critical eye.

"I've been in the woods with Kitty, rolling in the mud and sleeping in a tree hammock," announced the boy proudly. "And, please, Ricky, I'm going to take Kitty home with me. She hasn't any nice girl's things in the woods."

Mrs. Philow and Leonore were standing waiting for an opportunity to extend hospitality.

"This young man just came to take a peek at his old room, Grace," the mother explained. "You see, he is the Mr. Gordon we have been hearing about, and now to think everybody knows everybody——"

Leonore was blushing prettily. Neal had stepped aside to speak with her. No doubt, he was praising the running of his launch, and inviting her to try it.

Kitty edged up to Royal and pinched his fat little leg. "You're not going to give me up, are you?" she said timidly.

"Nopy-nope!" answered Royal. "You must come too. Ricky, where is mother? Take me to her."

"I am going to do just that," replied the good-looking sailor.

"Oh, no, please don't," begged Kitty. "I couldn't let Roy go out of my sight—I wouldn't," she protested.

"But you may all come along. How would that be?" replied Richard Gordon. "My launch is lying at the pier, and the Royal is at anchor just over there."

"And is our big yacht out there?" asked the little boy.

"Surest thing," answered the yachtsman.

"But how do I know—know you are not a kidnapper?" Kitty stammered suddenly.

Every one laughed, but Kitty's distress was genuine.

"He is not a kidnapper, Kitty. He is my Ricky," said Royal. "Please hurry and take me to mother."

The girls were too surprised at the whole proceedings to venture any suggestion, but upon being pressed by Neal and Dick, it was arranged that all hands should take a flying trip out to the launch, and see Royal presented to his mother.

Kitty objected—said she was afraid of the ocean, and made other excuses, but when she finally realized that the little boy would be taken off without her if she did not go, she at last consented.

"Another excursion," called out Cleo. "Come on girls, the more the merrier," and chaperoned by Leonore, the party undertook that delightful sight—seeing a millionaire's yacht.

A more dramatic picture than Kitty on that wonderful yacht can scarcely be imagined. It

was awe-inspiring to every one, but to this quaint, picturesque little figure, it was nothing short of marvellous. Once Royal saw the slender, dainty little woman, he called "Muzzer" there was no longer any doubt as to the genuineness of the claim, in Kitty's mind.

"Yep," she said. "That's the lady he talked about, that's his mother."

"And to think I would have sailed away again without my baby, but for you," said Mrs. Alton to Kitty. "How can I ever thank you?"

"I loved him, and we had good times," explained the girl, "but I would never have been brave enough to get away from Aunt Hannah but for these scouts. I'm going to be a Girl Scout as soon as I get in a higher grade," she said emphatically.

It was quite a task to decide what to do with Kitty. They finally arranged that the two young men, Neal and Dick, would run around to the island, and brave the fury of Miss Hannah Morehouse, in a manner calculated to quiet any possible objections on her part. In fact Royal's father sent a very strong message, charging her with misusing the funds given in her charge, to be expended for his little son.

"The whole proceeding is an outrage," declared the millionaire. "When the doctor ordered a sea voyage for my wife, and said it would be injurious to the child, this woman

made plans to take the boy, live in the open, and roll in the mud and so forth."

"She did that all right," broke in Kitty.

"It seemed feasible," he continued, "and while she said it would be costly—that did not matter," turning to the group. "Why, I feel only the brave fight of this child has saved him for us. And I am not sure what course I shall pursue in dealing with Hannah Morehouse."

"Only Daddy!" begged the golden-haired boy, who clung to his mother, "please don't let her come around here. She's too mean to Kitty and me, and we don't ever want to see her again, do we Kitty-dear?"

"All ashore, who are going ashore!" called out Neal, and at that the happy party climbed back into the Runner, the auxiliary launch of the yacht, Royal, and in a few minutes were again at Sea Crest.

"And you can come back with me, Kitty," begged Julia. "I have a big house and you can have a room to yourself until you are ready to go to school as Mrs. Alton wishes to arrange."

"And Kitty," said Louise, when the bewildered child was quiet enough to listen, "you need not worry about the hundred dollars Miss Hannah refuses to pay you for you own a lot of property on Luna Land."

"Aunt Hannah's property!" she gasped. "I knew it. I'll run her off the place, but I'll build a nice little house for good old Uncle Pete."

"Here's your bag," said Grace; "don't lose it."

"Oh, wait, girls, sit down until I give you your stockings and things." They dropped down on the terrace, and she dragged the things from her bag. She drew a purse from the very bottom of the satchel, and looked around before she opened it.

"Now wait," she said again, biting her thin lips. Then she pulled out a piece of yellow paper from a rusty leather purse.

"Our fire-bug threat," exclaimed Louise. "How did you get that?"

"I wanted to tell you long ago, I was the Weasle, but it wasn't all my fault. Aunt Hannah said if I acted queer folks would shun me, and then I didn't have to worry so about hiding Royal.

"When I got started at it, it seemed like fun. I had no girl friends, and I liked to scare the others, so I used to fix fires on the beach, and let them get fanned into flames by the wind. But I never set fire to chicken coops, and those other places. I guess robbers did that. Then, as soon as you girls came around, and acted so brave about it, I saw it was more fun to have friends than to scare them off," she finished with an expression of genuine contrition.

"Well, it's all right now, Kitty, and you have been very brave to watch so faithfully over Royal. That was good scouting," said Isabel.

"But think of Louise saving my life from the pier?" she exclaimed.

"And what a fine moving picture we all made holding that life net for you this afternoon," Cleo reminded her, laughingly.

"I can't quite believe it about the papers," Kitty reflected aloud.

"The tin box is in my daddy's safe, but the deeds to Luna Land are being searched by lawyers," explained Louise.

"Suppose we stop at Captain Dave's and tell him all the news first," suggested Margaret.

"All agreed!" called Helen and it was almost sun down before the group in front of the station, with Kitty Schulkill as a centerpiece, disturbed the picture.

It was the end of a day, the end of a vacation, and is the end of our story, until we meet the happy little group in our next volume, to be called "THE GIRL SCOUTS AT CAMP COMALONG."

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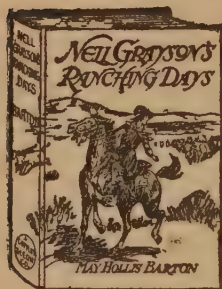
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